

Get the Most of Your Convention Experience

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How many years have you been coming to our convention? You may have had the same experience other first time attendees have had. Cramming classes in from Friday morning to Sunday afternoon, eating on the run, scribbling notes on your handouts, needing a pen, a business card or paper, and trying to remember new choreography to incorporate into your classes.

After a couple of years of attending, the “seasoned professionals” know how to schedule their time and make the most of their conference experience. But let’s examine how you can have the conference work for you long well after it is over.

I recently spoke to Pam Ruderman, Group Fitness Director, from Sky Athletic Club in Rockville Centre, NY. Pam meets with the staff members who are attending the conference before and after the event. Before the event, she sits with her staff, and together, they coordinate their schedules. They make sure to cover all the classes they have interest in, and in some cases, with more than one participant. In this manner they can pool their experiences so that in their debriefing they can collegially discuss any new learnings and trends. Pam looks for an enthusiastic response from conference attendees and then incorporates what she knows will work in her club. Could this work for you? Whether you come with another or a group of colleagues, you can pool your information and experiences. This will generally work better for you if you share expectations beforehand.

Another conference attendee relies on the presenters to spice up her programs. Many presenters offer their own music or videos for sale after their workshops and many welcome feedback and questions well after the conference is over. Their hand-outs often have their email addresses too.

Another group exercise instructor incorporates all new choreography as soon as the conference is over so as not to forget it. She takes a notebook with her to class, records and practices the routines after class until she has them right. This same instructor also brings with her a box of pencils and pens, makes notations on the back of all business cards she receives and scans the conference message board for any new teaching opportunities. This year she is coming to the conference with index cards to post job wanted ads, a zip-lock bag for all her business cards and a pencil sharpener.

The conference can satisfy your immediate need for credits, but it is the seasoned conference attendee who sees greater opportunity than that. Conferences offer you the chance to network, and bring back ideas and trends that will propel your fitness facility until the next conference.