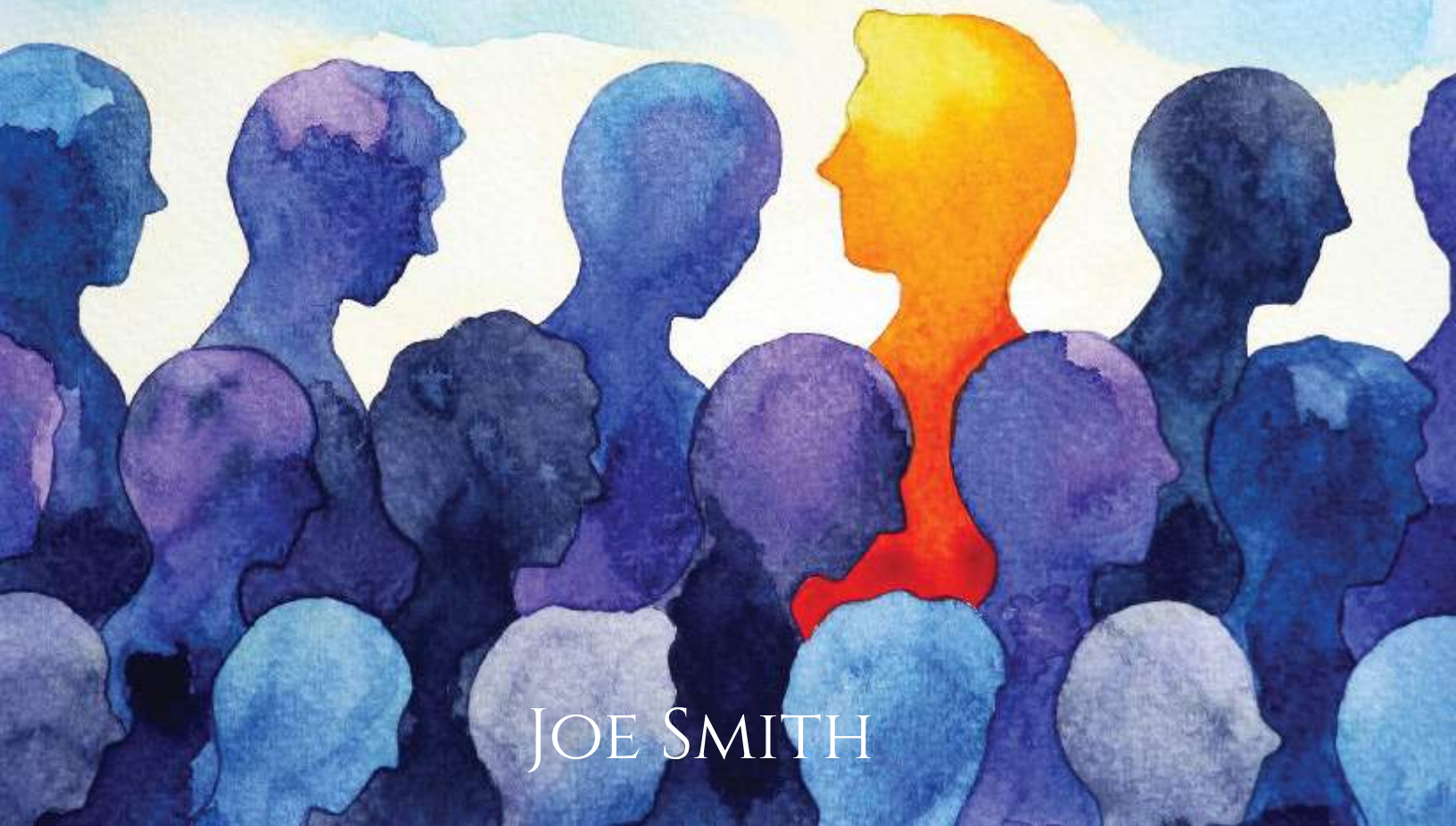


5 THINGS ACTIVE INTROVERTS DO DIFFERENTLY

at a Professional Conference



JOE SMITH

“YOUR CONFIRMATION: WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT...”

Do you dread the thought of attending a large professional conference? Are you overwhelmed by the idea of networking in such a crowded and noisy environment? Don't worry; it's natural to feel this way as an introvert. Attending professional conferences can be daunting, but with the right strategies, you can make the most out of your experience. This ebook will show you five powerful tactics to help you get the most out of your conference and enjoy yourself along the way. Learn how to make meaningful conversations, find moments of peace and relaxation, and create long-lasting connections with like-minded professionals. With these strategies, you can approach your next professional conference feeling confident and ready for a successful and enjoyable experience. So don't hesitate or hold back - embrace the opportunity and use these strategies to make your conference experience a memorable one.

DID YOU KNOW...

It may be a shock to realize that, by not participating in professional conferences and development opportunities as an introvert, one could be putting their career growth and advancement at risk. According to research published in the Harvard Business Review, networking is essential for career success; however, those who are more introverted may struggle with the interpersonal effort required of such opportunities. As such, attending events like conferences or workshops can be essential in taking advantage of potential professional advancements. So the question to yourself is this... How do I not hold back my growth and professional development in the name of comfort?

TAKE ACTION: Quick pulse check as to why you even going to this conference...

Why are you going to this conference?

- "I was told I had to go" (Stupid manager caring about my growth and development.)
- "I honestly enjoy learning new things" (Nice. That's the attitude!)
- "I enjoy free tote bags and squishy toys." (Fair enough.)

Okay, seriously, now, answer these three questions to help you get started:

1. Why are you going to this conference?

2. What do you wish to take away from this investment of your time and energy?

3. List two ways you can use these takeaways in your work and/or life.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

I remember the first time I was invited to attend a professional conference. I was filled with dread and anxiety, not knowing what to expect or how to prepare mentally. I thought maybe it was just me, that all the other attendees were excited and prepared while I fumbled my way through it.

As I arrived at the event and started to mingle, I could feel my nerves taking over. Everyone seemed to move confidently amongst the sea of people while I felt like an outsider. It was hard to focus on engaging in conversations; I wanted it all to be over as soon as possible.

But then something changed after that first event. I realized that if I was going to make it through the conference, I had to find a way to make it work for me. So I started off by focusing on making the event interesting and engaging in my own way. Instead of viewing it as daunting, I made an effort to engage with people who resonated with me and spark conversation around topics that interested me.

At the same time, I made sure to recognize when it was time to move on. I learned that sometimes the conversations just weren't going anywhere, and it was better for me to politely excuse myself and find something else of interest.

I started making my own agenda instead of allowing others to force an agenda on me. I chose meaningful conversation topics and found ways to make it feel like a personal journey, not just the same old events everyone else experienced.

I recognized the importance of finding my own "recharge zone". Whenever things started feeling overwhelming or too much for me to handle, I made sure to take time out for myself. I took a break from the hustle and bustle of the conference and focused on regaining my energy and motivation by taking some time to rest or engage in activities that brought me joy.

Finally, I found it helpful to just smile. Even if I was feeling anxious or overwhelmed, putting on a smile made all the difference. It really helped me to connect with others and break down the walls of discomfort that I had so often put up between us.

By following these five strategies, I found a way to make professional conferences enjoyable for me. Instead of dreading them, I now look forward to attending each event and immersing myself in the conversations and experiences that come along with it.

I'm proud to say that I am now an active participant at professional conferences, eagerly embracing the challenges and opportunities each one has to offer. And I owe it all to these five strategies that have proven invaluable in helping me make the most of my conference experience.

TAKE ACTION: If this isn't your first conference, what are 1-2 of your favorite memories from past conferences? (e.g., Met an expert in your field, Heard a celebrity speak, etc.)

- Capture some of those highlights below:

MYTH BUSTING

Common beliefs about introverts attending a big conference include:

- **Introverts may not have the outgoing attitude or energy to make the most of a big conference.** It is a myth that introverts cannot make the most of big professional conferences. On the contrary, introverts have unique strengths and perspectives that can be incredibly beneficial in these environments. Indeed, they may not possess the same outgoing attitude or energy as extroverts, but they can find ways to engage and connect with others through meaningful conversation, shared interests, and a genuine interest in the event.
- **Introverts cannot be successful at professional conferences.** Introverts don't always (but sometimes, right?) hide away at big conferences; instead, they can use their strengths and strategies to make the event enjoyable. This could include finding recharge zones, engaging in conversations that are meaningful to them, making their own agenda, and even putting on a smile to connect with others. By taking these proactive steps, introverts can learn to navigate and make the most of professional conferences.
- **"That's just the way I am."** The mindset of "That's just the way I am" is unhelpful and a limiting belief. Instead of accepting things as they are, introverts can take control of their experience and find ways to make professional conferences enjoyable. With practice, introverts can learn how to connect with others in meaningful ways, find their own recharge zones, and make the event interesting. By actively engaging with conferences, introverts can move past the idea that they can't possibly enjoy themselves in these environments and instead embrace all they have to offer.



5 THINGS ACTIVE INTROVERTS DO DIFFERENTLY

Thing #1: Make the Event Something of Interest to You

No matter the event, there are always ways to make the experience and event your own. To start, take a moment to focus on what you want out of the event.

- What is it that interests you?
- What are your goals for attending?

Take time to consider these questions and set your intentions before diving in. Once you have a clear idea of your goals, it will help you make the event meaningful and enjoyable.

When attending a conference, the best way to make it your own is to take time for yourself. Even if it's just ten minutes between sessions, seek a quiet spot where you can relax and recharge.

Allow yourself to be mindful of what brought you here in the first place - your interests and goals for participating - and reflect on them.

Don't be afraid to step away and catch up on emails or call a friend if it helps you to stay focused. The more present and engaged you are, your experience will be more meaningful.



Thing #2: Make it Your Agenda

Having your own agenda for the event will help you make the most out of it and ensure you get the maximum benefit from attending. To create an agenda tailored to your needs, start by planning ahead:

- Download and review the conference planner and/or App
- Review lists of speakers, themes, and events. Note topics of interest and decide what you want to get out of the event.
- Take into consideration the proximity of each event or session. A nice walk can be a great recharge before the next event. You also don't want to be sprinting a half marathon to the keynote event.
- Instead of simply hearing from speakers and taking notes, take the time to actively engage in what they have to say. Ask questions and take part in any activities that spark your curiosity or passion.

If an aspect of the conference doesn't interest you, moving on and focusing your attention elsewhere is okay.

- Find recharge zones throughout the event that provide a break from engaging in intellectual thought or attending stimulating conversations.

With this approach, any conference can be made into your own personal agenda.



Thing #3: It's Okay to Move On

- Let's be honest; attending a conference can be overwhelming and tiring, but it doesn't have to be. You will likely find yourself in conversations or situations that are no longer interesting. That's not being rude; it's just a fact for you. It's important to remember that moving on from these moments is okay. Instead of feeling guilty for being uninterested, get back to your agenda. When the time comes to move on, smile confidently and make the transition gracefully.
- Don't let yourself get stuck in a state of exhaustion and overwhelmed at the conference. Take control and break free from those mundane conversations going nowhere fast! Be brave, be bold, and act in your best interest - find something stimulating to engage with, or go seek some solace if you need it. There's no better way to truly make the most out of your experience than curating discussions which line up with what inspires YOU personally. So remember: keep smiling as you charge ahead into new territory for an invigorating journey among like-minded learners and introverts!
- When you are feeling overwhelmed or disengaged in a conversation, what will you do/say?



Thing #4: Find Recharge Zones

- Okay, Scout, time to put those navigation skills to use! At professional conferences, introverts can create or find their own recharge zones where they feel comfortable. This could mean setting aside time to explore the city on your own, stroll around the venue grounds, or check out local attractions near the conference site. I enjoy going for a run to explore the area and doing so alone (most of the time). I've always found something or someplace to check out on my own time later that day or week.
- Additionally, try to find quiet corners of the conference area and use them as mini-retreats to relax, gather your thoughts, and prepare yourself for the following conference activities. Sometimes it's even worth carving out a room or area that has been designated as a 'quiet zone' where you can take some time away from the hustle and bustle of networking and events. If you need to, bring headphones and listen to calming music to help you feel more relaxed and at ease. By finding your own recharge zones during conferences, you'll be able to stay energized and ready for whatever comes your way!
- Sometimes, you just have to create recharge zones and set aside time each day for self-care. Taking breaks, whether for a few minutes or an hour, can help you reset and keep your energy up throughout the day. If you are staying at a hotel near the conference, sometimes heading back to your room to refresh and catch your breath is a great reprise.

Try to plan ahead and find (or create) designated areas for these activities so that you know where your "time out" spot is when you need it.



Thing #5: Smile

- I know, I know... I cringed, too, when I typed that word as an actual piece of advice. AND, I also recognize advising someone to "smile" can be a different experience between men and women. My intent is not to sound trivial or insensitive to others' experience. So I invite you beyond a physical smile and to consider how you feel, think, and act when you do smile (to others, to yourself). There is so much research (#googleit) on the power and impact of a smile. It boosts your confidence (it actually does) and allows you to control your experience (you are choosing to smile and who gets one).
- Smiling can provide a moment of self-care; it offers an opportunity to step back, take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are doing great. Smiling also helps you relax and enjoy the experience of learning something new and meeting interesting people. More importantly, smile for you.
- If you are an introvert attending a professional conference, it's important to remember that a smile goes a long way. A simple, genuine smile can help you make meaningful connections with others and even boost your own confidence.
- Practice the art of the smile as a game. As you walk from one event to the next make a commitment to make eye contact and smile at five people. No conversation, no new BFF, just your gift to those five people. I started doing this when I run and I pass by people. "Hey, have a good morning/enjoy your walk/run..." What I've found over the years is that a "Smile and a Hey" has become an automatic habit even when I am not running. NOTE: The purpose is to stretch out of our introvert comfort zone, not put yourself in a situation you don't feel safe.

Even we introverts need some social connection from time to time.



I'M DOING THE THINGS, BUT...

I'm Not Feeling Prepared or Confident - First, answer this question "Am I feeling this way because this is uncomfortable or because I've run out of energy?" If your answer is "uncomfortable," get back to and follow your plan/agenda. Nothing grows in a comfort zone. Make adjustments if needed, but maximize your experience by following your plan. If your answer is "running out of energy," which recharge strategies can you use for the next 5-10 minutes? Step outside the conference hall, hit your hotel room for a refreshing break for 6 mins, or send a text to a loved one for an emotional boost.

I'm Over-Committing to Events - Dang, you've overcommitted. Two more sessions to attend, and you accepted that invite for an after-conference cocktail meet and greet (ugh, more people you don't know). If you've had a successful day thus, cut one of your remaining sessions by seeing if it will be recorded or at least will provide the slide deck with speaker contact information. If you can get the content and have a path to ask questions, skip that one unless you really want to meet the speaker. As for that after-conference time cocktail meet and greet?... Have one drink, meet three people, thank the sponsor, grab a freebie, and head back to your hotel room. You'll be so proud of yourself! Look at you, all social and stuff!

I'm Struggling to Make Meaningful Connections - Yeah, I know... People. But this can be fun, too, without the stress of a new "forever friend" connection. Gamify it! I've used a "game" in these situations: "I'm Doing a Study." Set a goal of six people in the next hour or two. As I am walking around, I smile, make eye contact, and "Hi, how are you?" If they engage (i.e., respond and don't keep walking), I'll say, "By the way, I'm doing some informal research while I am here. Mind if I ask you two questions?" Either you find someone with a shared interest to chat about or thank them and move on. It is an easy and often entertaining way, to connect with people.

TOUGH LOVE TIPS

Use Your Plan - Remember that plan you created? Bring it to life. One of my favorite mantras is "Bad days are good data." Go get data, so you have a better plan next time.

Evaluate Throughout The Day - Stuff happens, and plans can change. Evaluate your energy throughout the day. When you need a break or recharge, go for that walk. Step aside for a bit, but never out. Don't short your goal for a short-term escape.

Go! - No excuses. You have a plan; execute it. It's always hard or uncomfortable until it is not and the only way to get past hard and uncomfortable is by doing. You'll be fine.



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Introverts can be just as successful and fulfilled at professional conferences as their extroverted counterparts, but it requires extra preparation and planning. Introverts should focus on being self-aware, forming a plan of action for the event, being mindful of their energy levels throughout the day, and putting on a confident smile. By taking these steps, introverts can reap the benefits of attending professional conferences, such as meeting new contacts, learning new skills and knowledge, and networking with others. With creativity and preparation, introverts can turn any professional conference into a successful and enjoyable experience.

One more thing as we wrap up... Want a bonus tip? A nugget of direction to do more?

Use these same skills and actions in other parts of your life.

- Have a company or team offsite coming up? Do these five things.
- Have an extended family vacation planned? Do these five things.
- Promise yourself you'd do more for your community this year? Do these five things.

Thanks for making time to get this far and doing the work for a more successful and fulfilling life for yourself. And thanks for taking care of you. You got this.

Want to stay in the conversation and keep learning? Follow **Active Introvert** on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

Have a question or just want to say "Hey!"? Shoot me a note at joe@activeintrovert.com.

You're awesome.

Joe

ACTIVE INTROVERT CONFERENCE PLANNER

Conference Name: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

(any local points of interest you can add to the trip since you'll already be there? (museums, site seeing, theme parks, breweries, etc.))

Primer Questions

1. Why are you going to this conference?

2. What do you wish to take away from this investment of your time and energy?

3. List two ways you can use these takeaways in your work and/or life.

Myth Busting

What is a limiting belief/story that might hold you back at the conference?

Thing #1: Make the Event Something of Interest to You

- This experience is going to help me...

- I am excited to hear/see/learn more about _____

Thing #2: Make it Your Agenda

- Download and Review Conference Planner and/or App
- Tracks or Themes at the Conference I Want to Follow
- My Conference Schedule is Built and Ready to Go!

Thing #3: It's Okay to Move On

When I'm feeling overwhelmed or disengaged in a conversation, I will:

1. _____
2. _____

Thing #4: Find Recharge Zones

My three go-to Recharge Zones are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thing #5: Smile

I smile (to others/for myself) because

Energy Meter

0 = zapped **1** = good day but exhausted **2** = today was actually great **3** = fired up!

Watch for patterns of behaviors or thoughts that either are serving you well or taking you off course from your goals. This Energy Meter is an easy way to do so by defining your energy for each half of your day.

Pre-Conf: AM was a _____ PM was a _____ Why:

Day 1: AM was a _____ PM was a _____ Why:

Day 2: AM was a _____ PM was a _____ Why:

Day 3: AM was a _____ PM was a _____ Why:

_____ AM was a _____ PM was a _____ Why:

NOTES:
