



CONFERENCE HACKS

The Ultimate Guide to Getting the Most out of a Blog Conference



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INTRODUCTION

Attending a blog conference is an excellent way to receive education from professional bloggers and industry experts. Conferences provide networking opportunities where you can connect with publishers in your niche, potential sponsors, and brands. But are you getting the most out of the conferences you attend? This eBook contains everything you need to know for pre-conference preparation, tips to maximize your experience at the conference, and post-conference resources to wrap up the event.

We want you to get the most out of the conferences you attend because they offer valuable learning opportunities and experiences that you won't find in Facebook groups, Twitter chats, or webinars. Sharing ideas with your peers and getting feedback from blog experts will give you incredible new ideas for your work. Being face-to-face with brands will help you stand out when paid posts become available and possibly open the door to new partnerships. Take your conference game to the next level by using the resources and tips in this eBook.



NETWORK LIKE A BOSS

Your conference experience begins before you even set foot in the conference center. Take the time beforehand to find out who else will be attending and start connecting with the people you are interested in meeting. If the conference you are attending has an app, download it. The app will likely have a list of who else has registered. You can also use the conference hashtag to see who is talking about the event online. This is a great time to update your social media accounts. If you are looking up other attendees, chances are that others are looking you up too.

Almost all blog conferences will have a private Facebook group. This is a great place to discover who is attending and networking with fellow attendees. If you're feeling brave, post in the Facebook group that you're looking for roommates for your hotel room. Room with some new people! By the end of the conference, you'll have made 3 new blogging friends. You will also have automatic networking buddies to attend social events with.

Once you have identified a few bloggers who will be attending, look up their site and find out what they are really good at. Make a list of the people you want to meet (or want to room with!) and what you want to learn from them. Decide early what you want to take away from the conference experience so you are prepared to meet the right people and ask the right questions.



[Build Your Blog Conference](#) has been called the blog conference with the most actual education. After years of attending conferences where the content was lacking, we set out to create a conference where every aspect was devoted to building your blog.

SELL YOUR BRAND

Before you head to the conference, make sure you're ready for business. Have your business cards, media kit, and personal pitch updated so you are prepared to show your best work.

Business cards are essential. A well-designed business card will capture the attention of a brand representative or another publisher and can keep you in their memory long after your initial meeting. It may be hard to remember your charming smile or extra-professional handshake after talking to hundreds of other people, but a business card will serve as a great reminder of who you are after it's all said and done.

If you don't already have business cards, we recommend ordering them online or from a local print shop. Buying online from [Vistaprint](#) or [GotPrint.com](#) is usually the cheapest option and the cards are shipped directly to you. However, you won't be able to physically see the cards until they are finished. You can often find online discounts from sites like [Groupon](#) or [RetailMeNot](#). On the other hand, buying business cards from a local print shop will give you personal service with reasonable prices. One advantage to working with a local shop is that you will get a sample of the card before the batch is printed. This way, you can make changes as you go.

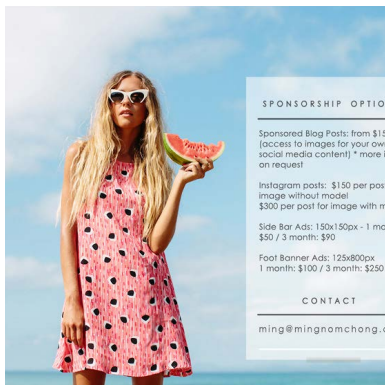
You also need to update your media kit if you plan on looking for opportunities with brands. Make sure your stats are current. Update any images or features with new successful posts or images from your blog. If you keep your media kit digital, include a QR code on your business card for easy access. When providing a print copy, condense it down to one page of your best work. Include a QR code or easy URL to link to the complete kit at the bottom of the page so they can see more if they are interested.

We recommend doing this for a conference so brands and sponsors will have a visual understanding of your blog. You can also staple your business card to the top of your single-page, printed media kit so the recipient will have easy access to your contact information.

Remember, you could be attending the conference with hundreds of other publishers wanting to make the same connections as you. Standing out is essential. We recommend that you practice introducing yourself and your site in less than a minute. This is called an “elevator pitch” because you only have an elevator ride’s worth of time to sell your brand to someone new. Similarly, you won’t have very much time in front of brands before someone interrupts. A good elevator pitch is a 30-second description of your work that gives the person you are talking to a clear idea of why you are worth listening to and what you have to offer. The goal is to make them want to learn more so include specific details that they can ask more about.

Here is an example of an effective elevator pitch to give to a brand representative: “Hi, I am Cari with LoveToCook.com. I blog about new recipes and clean eating to 90,000 monthly readers. I am known for my food photography and easy, wholesome meals for on-the-go families. My audience would be very interested in your products.”

With a compelling introduction, unforgettable business card, and enticing media kit, you will be putting your best self in front of the brands you want to work with. Stand out by being yourself and communicating your own brand with remarkable presentation.



PINCH YOUR PENNIES

All of this learning experience has a price... but that shouldn't hold you back from attending. This section will show you where to look for the best prices and deals on hotel, rental cars, and event discounts.

Conferences will often negotiate a hotel discount for attendees. We recommend staying at whichever hotel the conference has partnered with for two reasons. First, the hotel will often provide a shuttle to the airport or any off-site conference events. Second, you'll be around more attendees and have more opportunities to connect with people in your industry.

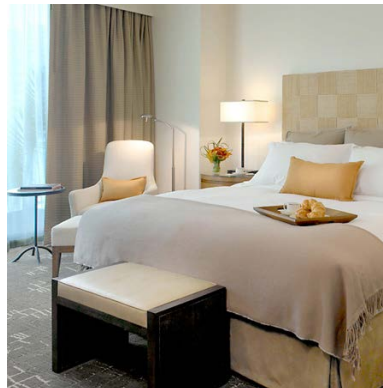
If the conference does not offer a hotel discount, there are still plenty of ways to save money on hotel reservations. Use an incognito or private browser when you book your hotel. If you visit a hotel or travel site multiple times, the site may show you higher prices. Many sites use dynamic pricing, meaning it will show different prices depending on an individual's search or browsing history. Using a private mode on your browser will not allow these sites access to your history or cookies.

Priceline has a bidding feature that allows you to bid on vacant hotel rooms. Research the average cost of a hotel room in that area and bid 50-60% of the average price. If the hotel has enough vacancies, they will accept your bid. Be aware that you have to enter your credit card to bid and, if the bid is accepted, your card will automatically be charged. There is also an "Express Deals" feature that will still get you savings without the bidding.

Bundling your travel, rental car, and hotel through the same service will also get you cheaper rates. As a last resort, you can find cheap rates at hotels near the airport. Keep in mind that if you book a hotel far from the conference center, you will not be close to other attendees. Consider the convenience of the location while booking your accommodations.

If a shuttle isn't offered to the conference, or you would like the freedom to explore the city after conference events, you may need to rent a car. This can be a significant expense, but there are a few ways to save money on rental cars. By registering for [USAA](#), you will have access to rental car discounts even if you are not in the military. These discounts are especially helpful for people under age 25 to avoid high fees due to their age.

Sam's Club and Costco wholesale clubs also offer rental car discounts to their members. Check online or in-store to get more details. As for insurance, check with your provider to see if rental cars are covered by your auto insurance. Many credit cards also include renters insurance. By doing your homework, you can save money by not buying rental insurance you don't need.



If you want a great education without traveling long distances, Build Your Blog Academy is for you! The Academy provides essential training on web design, social media, monetization, and content protection. Access over 70 educational courses and recorded classes from BYBC to grow your blog and establish a loyal following. [Learn more here.](#)



MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME

When preparing for a blog conference, there are two schedules you need to pay attention to: yours and the conference's. Familiarize yourself with the conference schedule so you know what to expect and what topics you may want to research in the meantime. You also need to pay attention to your own schedule. You won't want to leave your followers hanging just because you're out of the office for a few days.

Review the conference schedule to see what sessions are offered. Conferences will often have multiple breakout sessions happening at once and you will only be able to register for one at a time. With breakout sessions, you won't be able to attend all of them so do your homework in advance and register for the sessions that will be most valuable to you. If you attend the conference with a buddy or co-worker, consider attending separate sessions and meeting back with notes. Conferences sometimes offer recordings of their classes. Check to see if recordings will be provided for any sessions you can't attend. Build Your Blog Conference 2015 has recorded videos from all of their conference classes. [You can subscribe to those here.](#)

Take care of your work schedule in advance so you won't have to worry about it during the conference. Write and schedule your blog posts for the week of the conference. You can schedule your blog posts directly in WordPress. Draft and finish your blog post but instead of selecting to post immediately, click "Schedule." For a full tutorial on scheduling blog posts, click here. You can also use a guest blogger to keep your site active while you're away. Make sure the guest author has a track record of providing great content so you won't need to worry about your site while you're engaged at the conference.

Schedule any crucial social media posts in advance. We know maintaining all of your social media platforms can take a lot of time, so we recommend scheduling out your posts for the entire week of the conference. This way, you will be able to enjoy your time at the conference and complete your post-conference work without being overwhelmed by your social media responsibilities. Keep in mind, you will be posting about your experiences during the conference. The conference may also offer giveaways on social media that you will want to participate in. Schedule your posts out in a way that your posting at the conference doesn't overload your followers. For a list of our favorite social media schedulers, review the Social Analytics and Scheduling section of [The Blogopedia: A Master List of Blogging Resources.](#)

PACK WITH CONFIDENCE

Knowing what to pack when you attend a blog conference can be stressful. You don't want to be overdressed, underdressed, or forget anything important right? And if you're flying, you have to deal with limited space and weight requirements. Here's how to pack efficiently without forgetting the essentials.

Start with a travel checklist. We recommend starting this list about a week before you leave so you have time to add to it throughout the week. Start with your technology list because, let's face it, you don't want to be without a phone charger when you're trying to post pictures from the conference or add new phone numbers to your contact list. Think about what technology you will be bringing - a phone, tablet, or computer? Bring a charger for any of these devices you intend to bring. Keep in mind, if you are traveling to international conferences you may have to deal with different types of electrical outlets. Apple offers a great [World Traveler kit](#) if you think you'll have a problem charging your iPhone or MacBook in another country.

During the conference, you can expect to take a lot of notes. How do you prefer to take notes? You can use a laptop, tablet, voice recording, or an old-fashioned notebook and pen. Decide which works best for your learning style and pack accordingly. Just make sure you are equipped to take notes that you will be able to reference after the conference is over.

Check the weather forecast for the dates of the conference. You won't want to get caught off guard by a rainstorm or inclement weather. Conference rooms can be kept very cold so bring an extra sweater or jacket. Research the venue and schedule. How much walking should you expect? If you're going to be walking between conference venues, pack comfortable shoes. If the hotel you are staying at has a pool, pack a swimsuit. Even if you think you won't go swimming, bring one just in case. You won't want to be left out if your new blogging buddies want to have a pool night on the last day of the conference! And finally, pack evening wear for a cocktail event, dinner with a brand, or night out with other bloggers.

Deciding what to wear can be a pain. You don't want to be overdressed or underdressed, and sometimes the promotional materials for conferences are unclear on the dress code standards. To get an idea of the dress expectations, look at pictures of the previous year's event. Build Your Blog Conference 2015 has a great [Flickr account](#) where you can see what typical attire was for each of the events. You can also review the conference website and Instagram account. Look over the conference schedule as well. If a cocktail event is scheduled in the evening, you can assume that the dress is formal or business professional.

Are you flying to the conference? Pack light to save money on baggage fees. If you can manage to bring just a carry on, this can save you some extra cash. This may be easier for men because they can fit two suits in a garment bag, wear dress shoes on the plane, and pack their essentials in a carry-on. Women may want more options, so bringing a suitcase may be necessary. Try choosing an airline without baggage fees for the first bag to save some money. TripAdvisor has an awesome page that compares baggage fees for each airline. If you're checking a bag but want to avoid baggage fees, we recommend reviewing the link [here](#).

Finally, when packing, leave some room for swag! You're going to walk away from the conference with bags of free swag, piles of business cards, and stacks of notes. Make sure you take this into account when packing a suitcase, especially if you're flying. We recently got an awesome selfie stick from the Haven Conference and our office sure is grateful someone had room in a suitcase to bring it back!



MAKE A CONFERENCE GAME PLAN

Fast forward to the actual event. You arrived, signed in, and you're stoked to get things started. But how do you know you're getting the most bang for your buck during those jam-packed days? To maximize your experience during the conference, we've outlined the most important things to focus on: being active on social media, scheduling private events, soaking up information, and making time for social events.

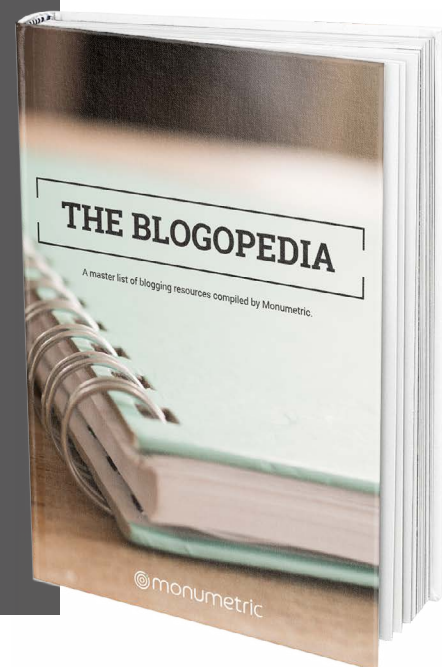
At every blog conference, social media should be first and foremost in everyone's minds. Social media connects you to the conference, speakers, brands, and other attendees. Share your conference experience via posts, tweets, and photos. Use the conference's social network to gain new connections and followers. Use the conference's hashtag in every single post. Posting during the conference will gain you more followers from other publishers at the conference. You will also see what fellow attendees are talking about and what conference topics are trending.


And what would a blog conference be without great education? To get the most out of the educational portions of the conference, take notes or record the speakers if permitted. Take notes with your laptop, tablet, or notebook depending on what you packed. However, when you're using these electronic items, stay on task. (The people sitting behind you probably won't appreciate watching you scroll your Facebook feed.)

By taking organized notes, it will be easier for you to access the information later on. For your own peace of mind, consider setting an out-of-office autoresponder on your email. That way, you won't feel pressured to constantly check your emails or immediately respond when you're taking notes on your laptop.

THE BLOGOPEDIA

Do you want to attend a blog conference but you don't know what conferences are available? The Blogopedia: A Master List of Blogging Resources includes nearly 200 of the best blogging conferences around the world. Find the leading conferences in food, DIY, parenting, travel, marketing, entrepreneurship, and design. Easily research conferences by date, location or topic so you can find the conference that best fits your needs. [Get the free eBook here.](#)





We do not recommend taking notes on a smartphone. Phones offer a lot of distractions and will detract from your educational experience. Texts, emails, and social media notifications can be very distracting as you're trying to take notes. Using your smartphone to take notes also looks unprofessional. You may be taking diligent notes, but to the bloggers and brands around you, it may look like you're texting or not paying attention. Sessions usually last only an hour or two so commit to not checking your phone during those times. And always silence your phone. This may seem obvious, but we've been in a room of 200 professionals listening intently to a keynote speaker when someone's phone went off. Trust us, you don't want to be that person.

We know your schedule is going to feel crowded already, but leave yourself some free time for lunch appointments. When you meet someone and would like to talk with them more, you'll want to have available time to meet with them on a one-on-one basis. Have the flexibility in your schedule to make lunch appointments with new people, fellow bloggers, sponsors, and brands. If your schedule is overloaded, you'll miss out on spontaneous opportunities like these. If the conference has a catered lunch, sit with people you don't know and introduce yourself. You never know who will be at your table. The most important thing is to embrace your extroverted self and take networking into your own hands. Take an interest in other people and always be positive in your interactions.

During your time at the conference, schedule at least one private event with a group of publishers. These can be publishers you look up to, want to get to know, or who are in a similar niche. Reach out to them on Twitter and set up a dinner event. Look for a restaurant within walking distance of the hotel or conference center to keep directions simple. If dinner times are booked, set up a dessert party the same way. Sometimes it's at these private events when publishers learn the most from each other.

Let's be honest, what everyone is looking forward to are the social events. Make time for these. They are one of the best ways to meet people! These are less formal and designed for socializing, so it's much easier to approach people if you're the timid type. Social events are about being social. You can bring business cards to the social events, but don't be all business. Talk to people about their interests and what they do. If you feel you've made a connection, you can offer your business card at the end of the conversation. However, be genuine. Don't be a pushy salesman for your own brand. Enjoy yourself and the company of your new connections.

CREATE STRONG CONNECTIONS

At a conference, you will have a lot of networking opportunities but you must take steps to solidify the connections you made. After meeting someone, write down their name, what you talked about, and where you met as soon as possible. It's best to write this on the back of their business card if you have it. With as many people as you meet at a conference, it is important to take note of these details so you have something personal to include when you follow up with them. When you include personal information, this makes it easier for your contact to remember you as well.

The most important thing is to make contact sooner rather than later. Proper etiquette is to reach out the next day. At this point, they should still remember you and the conversation you had with them. Connect with the person on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, or email. If during the face-to-face conversation you discussed connecting via a certain platform, reach out using that specific platform. Send a personalized message reminding them of how you met and what you talked about.

Finally, follow this person on social media and continually stay engaged with their content. Send congratulatory messages when something important happens in their life and remember their birthday. Things like this will keep the ball moving forward. You won't just be someone they met at a conference one time. You will be a familiar, engaged connection that adds value to their network and yours.



CONCLUSION

We know from personal experience how rewarding it is to attend blog conferences. Not only are conferences great for networking and education, but they are a perfect way to get excited about what you do. Being in a room full of people who share your same passion is one of the best ways to get fired up about your work. Get your creative juices flowing by learning new industry trends, hearing inspiring stories, and connecting with fellow bloggers.

Using the tips in this eBook, you'll walk away with new friends, valuable connections, increased followers, handy business cards, practical knowledge, incredible memories, and Grade A blog post material. You'll be able to get the most out of each and every conference you attend.

[Monumetric's](#) mission is to enable all publishers to create high-quality content while making the most income possible. We are committed to providing you with the support and resources needed to reach your site's potential. Conferences are a chance to further your business and grow personally and professionally. Use this resource to spread your influence and share your content while getting inspired!



WAS THIS E-BOOK HELPFUL? SHARE IT!