

# FRANCHISING WORLD®



## CRUSH CONFERENCE SEASON: A PLAYBOOK FOR FRANCHISE SUPPLIER PROS TO WIN BIG

By Jamie Izaks, All Points Public Relations

**As the franchise industry prepares for conference season, franchisors, franchisees, and suppliers are gearing up to enhance their attendance to its fullest potential.**

These gatherings offer attendees the chance to network with industry leaders, gain insights from expert sessions, explore innovative solutions, and build meaningful connections that drive new business opportunities. From pre-convention groundwork to post-event follow-ups, the following will explore how you can maximize your convention experience.

### Lay the Groundwork

Attending a conference can be a formative experience. For those who prepare ahead of time, work the floor accordingly, and follow up promptly, the time and financial commitment of attending a

franchise conference will pay off. However, attending these events without adequate preparation is akin to entering "The Big Game" without a playbook.

If you're researching an attendee before the conference, chances are they're doing the same to you. Make sure your LinkedIn profile is up to date. It's vital to have your LinkedIn profile polished and ready well before the event. Spend a bit of time working on the 'About' section on your profile and have a high-quality, recent photo. The same goes for your company page. Furthermore, start connecting with potential attendees on LinkedIn in advance. A thoughtful message accompanying your request can make a world of difference. This proactive approach not only builds familiarity but also opens the door for meaningful conversations during the event.

In addition to LinkedIn, proper email communication is essential. Sending targeted, personalized emails to key contacts ahead of the convention shows professionalism and intent. Highlight why you'd like to meet, what value you bring and suggest a time to connect. This groundwork ensures you're not scrambling to schedule meetings once the event begins. Many conventions, including the International Franchise Association's Annual Convention, offer dedicated apps to help attendees navigate the event. Leverage these tools to map out your schedule, identify high-priority contacts, and even initiate chats before arriving. These apps are invaluable for staying organized and maximizing your time on-site.

Equally important is preparing your marketing collateral. From presentations to handouts, every piece of material should not only align with your brand and speak to your expertise but should be readily available to share with potential contacts as well.

### Master the Two-Minute Drill

Once the convention is underway, your networking strategy will be put to the test in real time. Remember that first impressions matter and a disingenuous or overly aggressive approach can quickly alienate potential clients or partners. Networking is not about the hard sell; it's about relationship-building and reputation management.

Start with genuine conversations that showcase your knowledge and passion for your field. Be an active listener, show interest in others' challenges, and offer insights that add value to the conversation. To maximize your first impression, bring your elevator pitch out of storage ahead of time and give it a refresh. Memorable pitches are bite-sized verbal interactions that infuse a little bit of personality. Emphasize what makes you — or your business — unique, ensuring that you can hold the attention of the person on the other side of the conversation. Let your skills and services speak for themselves. Highlight your expertise without coming across as boastful or pushy. For suppliers, this means being prepared to articulate how your offerings solve specific problems or meet unique needs within the franchising industry.

Beyond the booth, look for opportunities to position yourself as a thought leader. Trade shows often include educational seminars and panels,

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which present immense marketing benefits and the chance to showcase your expertise.

All that said, avoid turning every encounter into a sales pitch; instead, aim to establish trust and relationships. Be mindful of cultural cues and individual personalities to ensure your approach is well-received. One common pitfall is coming across as insincere or “slimy,” especially when interactions feel overly transactional. Networking done right can set the stage for meaningful, long-term business relationships.

### Turning Contacts into Connections

The real work begins after the convention ends. Follow-ups are crucial to solidifying the relationships you've started to build. It's vital to stay connected with those you've met and see as potential clients or networking partners during the conference. Reiterate your value proposition, provide additional resources, and outline clear next steps for collaboration.

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The key to successful follow-ups is specificity. Generic outreach can feel insincere and fall flat, so it's essential to tailor your communication to reflect the conversations you had and the challenges you observed.

Remember, this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Every prospect has unique needs, and your proposals or next steps should reflect that. Be sincere and thoughtful in your outreach, especially if you're proposing visits, collaborations, or solutions. This personalized touch signals genuine interest and leaves a lasting impression that can turn conference introductions into valuable long-term relationships.

Start by referencing the specific details — whether it's scheduling a presentation, a topic that resonated, or even any potential travel plans discussed. Customized follow-ups demonstrate that you were engaged and attentive, setting the foundation for a meaningful partnership.

By taking the time to set up your LinkedIn profile, organize pre-convention communications, and perfect your marketing collateral, you'll set a strong foundation.

Prioritize genuine connections over the hard sell, ensuring your networking efforts enhance your reputation rather than detract from it. Capitalize on post-event opportunities with thoughtful follow-ups that turn introductions into long-term relationships. ☺



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