



Toolkit: Prepare for Success on a Trade Mission

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Toolkit: Preparing for a Successful a Trade Mission

Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to be part of the Canadian businesswomen's trade mission to Las Vegas and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference and Business Fair from June 21-23. This is an important investment both in building your business and in your own professional development.

Trade missions allow you to investigate new markets and business opportunities. Good research and preparation are essential. This toolkit is designed to help you plan and understand how to work the trade mission and the WBENC conference before, during and after the event, to ensure success and a good return on your investment. Inside you'll find tips and guidance, much of which is gleaned from past WBENC conferences and business fairs in 2009 and 2010.

As the organizers of this trade mission, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), along with WEConnect Canada, are here to assist you. DFAIT provides support to women exporters to leverage international markets through its Business Women in International Trade (BWIT) portfolio. BWIT provides valuable information on exporting and links business women with its network of trade commissioners around the world. They can provide you with market intelligence, leads and contacts in your targeted markets.

With its certification program qualifying women-owned businesses for opportunities with large corporations and government, WEConnect Canada is an ideal partner. If you are already certified, you will find that one of the greatest values of your certification is access to key contacts at events like this one - in particular corporate buyers, diversity professionals, and corporate members and sponsors of WEConnect Canada. These are high-level contacts whom you would otherwise likely never meet. Don't be shy in asking them for introductions within their companies.

You will also meet many other dynamic women business owners from Canada, the U.S. and abroad, with whom business alliances can be struck. This event also includes receptions where you have the opportunity to network and acquire valuable contacts.

Good luck with your preparations. We hope you find this toolkit useful, and encourage you to contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to having you as part of our Canadian delegation to Las Vegas!

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Introduction

Your decision to attend this trade mission and the WBENC conference is a wise one. It's a great opportunity to interact with high-level contacts you might not otherwise have the chance to meet, such as the corporate members of WEConnect and procurement officers from large companies. But that's not all. You will also:

- **Connect with women business enterprises (WBEs)** – You'll meet like-minded women business owners with whom you could potentially do business down the road.
- **Build relationships** – The face-to-face contact made possible by trade missions is invaluable in establishing relationships. People like to do business with people they know, and there's no better way to sell yourself and your business than by rubbing elbows and building rapport.
- **Enhance your professional development** – From conference sessions and people you meet at the various events you'll get lots of tips on how to grow your business and – if you are WEConnect certified – how to leverage your certification.



Section 1: Pre-event

PREPARATION: AS IMPORTANT AS BEING THERE

Preparation for trade missions is crucial, especially when they take place in conjunction with a conference or trade fair. Most importantly, you will want to optimize your time. It's easy to lose focus and waste time if you haven't formulated a plan that includes realistic, achievable goals. People today are busier than ever; we want to see a good return on our time investment. Good preparation will maximize your return on that investment.

Furthermore, you also want to be memorable. You've heard the saying "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression." Careful preparation is critical for securing the right first impression and making an impact. Preparation can also help you create networking opportunities at the event.

Without preparation, a large event like the WBENC conference (with upward of 3,000 attendees) can be overwhelming. Here are some tips on planning an effective approach to prospective corporate buyers, leveraging your time when visiting their booths and maximizing your chances of getting on their radar:

- Know your unique selling proposition. What is the uniqueness of your product or service to the end customer?
- Determine your value equation. Is there a value added you can offer them...or a surprise or delight?
- Do your homework to ensure you understand what your target companies need and want and why they may want to do business with you.
- Hone your unique selling proposition and elevator pitch (*more on page 11*), focusing on what would be most valuable and helpful to a prospect. Revise your message until it is as clear and concise as possible.
- Book your hotel ahead of time, even if you aren't sure you'll be attending; you can always cancel 48 hours before.
- Plan to arrive a day in advance and try not to schedule your departures immediately after the conference ends to leave time for follow-up with contacts or any additional meetings.



READY, SET... RESEARCH

Conducting research in preparation for a trade mission is critical and when a conference and trade show are part of the equation, that adds another dimension. If one-on-one meetings with prospective buyers have been set up in advance by the trade mission organizers, then it's imperative that you target your research to those companies first. But how do you find out what you need to know? How do you select other companies to investigate? Here are some points to consider:

- **Who is going to be there?** First, find out who is going to be there. Check the conference website in advance to see which corporations will be attending and plot the ones you'll visit (consult the WBENC website at www.wbenc.org). It is important that you plan to visit a preselected number. Focus on those at the top of your list!
- **Your targets' diversity attributes.** Identify the companies that best match the vision of your company and represent a good strategic fit with what you offer. Then consider your targets' diversity attributes. For example, are they WEConnect Canada sponsors, or do they have a supplier diversity program? Pay special attention to the event's sponsors, as their top executives are normally in attendance.
- **Narrow it down.** Narrow down your targets to a realistic number. You should aim to target the number of suppliers that best matches the vision of your company. Is it best for you to target three or four companies? Six to 10 companies?
- **Conduct research.** Conduct research to understand the culture of these targets as well as corporate buyer needs and their procurement process. Investigate what they do, where they are heading strategically and who to contact. Look for the person responsible for purchasing your goods or services since the buyers are varied in large companies. Corporate websites are a wealth of information, as are other trade mission participants who may have previously done business with these companies.
 - Start your research in your own backyard. See if you have been in contact with the company in the past and what information you have about them.
- **Register on corporate diversity databases.** Be sure to register on corporate diversity websites and vendor databases, where this feature is available. This can be time-consuming, and may be best handled by an administrative person or someone with good technical skills. Note that corporations at the WBENC business fair will typically want to know that you have already registered on their diversity websites as a first step towards potentially doing business with them.



- **Check the WEConnect portal.** If you are WEConnect-certified and targeting any of the sponsor companies, check the WEConnect portal. Who are the supplier diversity directors? They can be your advocates to buyers.
- **Research other participants.** Don't forget to research other trade mission participants or, if you are a certified WBE, other WBEs. See if there is anyone you can network with and partner with in bidding on Requests for Proposals (RFPs) or in expanding services to your customers and to suppliers of the corporations you're targeting.

PREPARING YOUR MATERIALS

Website

Make sure your website is up-to-date, with clear mission and offerings and correct contact information.

Mission critical document: Capability Statement

Your Capability Statement - what you say about your business when you register on corporate supplier diversity websites and what you can give prospects during meetings - is a key element in how you position yourself with corporations. It's especially vital during one-on-one meetings during trade missions.

Make sure you marry it with your targets' needs and write it in a way that is easy for them to filter. It's a good idea to have a separate, tailored statement for each company you have arranged to meet. Also ensure that you add it to corporations' diversity supplier websites when you register.

Here are some rules of thumb when creating a Capability Statement:

- **Keep it brief** (approximately two pages);
- **Create one for each target**, speaking to their needs;
- **Make it visually appealing** through use of your branding and logo;
- **Create a PDF** version for emailing purposes.

Your Capability Statement should include your core competencies, past performance, competitive advantage, company facts and contact information. (*See the template on page 23*).

Other valuable materials to bring

When a trade mission is attached to a conference, it's best to provide succinct materials such as a post card or a one-page backgrounder.

- Use your Capability Statement to create the one-page backgrounder or post card; each is basically a shorter, more generic version of the statement. Use bullet points and



attention-grabbing language to make your company more memorable to people in a hectic environment.

- Ensure that you print your materials on good-quality stock.
- Create business cards that highlight what you do. Consider making them larger than usual so that they can fold in the middle to the size of a normal card. The inside should highlight details of your company and the back can be left blank, allowing those receiving your card to make their own notes.

Some advice for WBEs

Consistency is key in all your marketing or branding, whether for a trade mission, conference or event, and in producing printed or online materials. If you are a certified WBE, your certification can be used as a powerful marketing tool. First decide how you will use the WEConnect certification, usually through a logo or tagline (e.g. “A WEConnect International certified Women Business Enterprise”) or a combination of the two. Next, incorporate it consistently throughout your promotional materials.

In other words, for every place your logo appears, WEConnect certification should appear too. WBE certification is a marketing edge for your business. Integrate it into all your branding and communications. It’s also important to keep your profile on the WEConnect Canada portal up to date, especially before attending a major event such as this trade mission and the WBENC annual conference.

In addition to any printed materials about you or your company that will accompany you on the mission, here is a list of branding opportunities that should include the certification credential:

- **Website.** Prominently display the certification logo on your home page. You can also incorporate mention of it in the “About Us” and “News” sections.
- **Email signature line(s).** Not only in your own signature, but those of your employees as well.
- **Stationery.** Business cards (yours and your staff’s), letterhead, fax cover sheets, invoices, etc.
- **Corporate brochure/sell sheet/catalogue.** Use customer testimonials to show your company is highly recommended.
- **Newsletters.** Whether print or electronic.
- **Social media.** Incorporate in Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs.
- **Proposals and presentations.** Lead with your company’s capabilities, but be sure to also mention your certification in both written proposals and any presentations you make – whether they are sales pitches directly to customers and prospects, or speeches and presentations at industry or business events.
- **Your bio.** Whether it’s your bio for use on your website or in any proposals, bids, presentations or speech introductions, including mention of your company’s certification underscores your credibility and the success you have achieved as a woman entrepreneur.



- **Event promotion literature.** This includes events you are running, participating in, or sponsoring.
- **Onsite displays.** For example, on cash registers or at trade/consumer show booths.

Tips

The WEConnect Canada portal is one of the best places to get noticed by procurement officers looking for diverse suppliers. Certified WBEs post short write-ups on the portal that are used to find the best match with WEConnect's corporate members. Here are some tips on how to make your page stand out to corporations searching the portal:

- Be clear. The write-up should be in plain language. Use of technical information here should be limited.
- State your core capabilities and clearly identify your niche products/services.
- Identify the scope of your sales operations (local, regional, national, North America, international).
- Include names of your existing clients if their brand would be recognized within your industry.
- Identify what makes your business different or the best choice as a supplier, e.g. "the only supplier that provides _____; the best at _____; a low-cost provider of _____; high-end quality provider of _____." The key here is to differentiate yourself from the competition. What makes you special? What is your unique selling proposition? If consulting/advice is a factor in your business, you may want to outline significant capabilities of your team.
- Key words – think about what *key words* a buyer may use to search for your products/services and ensure you use these words in your description.

In other words, ensure you answer the question, "Why should a company buy products/services from my business?" – The same question that should be answered by your Capability Statement.

ONE-ON-ONE MEETING PREPARATION

If one-on-one meetings are planned with any of your target companies, either at their premises or at the conference or associated events, be sure you are ready. In addition to the research you have already conducted on your top targets, here are other suggestions for preparation:

- **Put your package together.** Decide what materials you will give to the prospects you will be meeting. Make sure you demonstrate quality and your added value. Have a solid web presence that clearly shows your mission and offerings.



- **Know your goals.** What do you want to get out of the meeting? What do you think the other party wants? What are your expectations?
- **Have your pricing ready.** Determine what you cannot possibly negotiate away. Know your bottom-line and any deal breakers.
- **Research common connections.** Is there any relationship “history” that might support you or any connections in common?
- **Familiarize yourself** with the meeting locations and arrive early.

WORK THE TRADE MISSION EVEN BEFORE YOU GET THERE

Setting up your own meetings before you arrive, in addition to any meetings arranged by trade mission organizers, can help ensure your time is well spent. Even if arrangements to meet can't be set up in advance, a potentially valuable connection has been made in the attempt. Here are some tips:

- **Contact targets in advance** to see if you can set up a meeting or sit together at a function. (Knowing what functions interest them most can help you learn what's on their minds. Do you have solutions to their challenges or problems?)
- **Connect with the supplier diversity professionals first** to find out the kind of suppliers the company uses, what they look for in a supplier, and how the corporation buys. Ask them for an introduction to the decision makers who will hear your story and your pitch. (Check the company's website as the contact information will often be found there.)
- **Request a meeting** with the appropriate contact in your target company to better understand their needs and to provide a capabilities presentation on what you can do. If you're a certified WBE, be sure to mention that.
- **Ask the big players about their suppliers** (2nd tier) who may need your products/services. There can be tremendous opportunities among Tier 2 contracts.
- **Target other trade mission participants** to explore partnership opportunities.
- **Get information.** Attend information sessions about the event. Make your name known to the people who are there to help you before the event.
- **Make use of resources.** Use the help provided to you by DFAIT's Trade Commissioner Service and WEConnect. Sign up for buddies and, if you meet the criteria, one-on-one meetings with a Trade Commissioner.



YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH: A 20-SECOND DOOR OPENER

It's vital to have a succinct, 20-second description of what you do and how you do it in your back pocket. Think of it as "elevator speak" – how you would quickly and effectively tell this to a stranger during a short elevator ride.

First and foremost, it's essential to have a firm grasp on what your company is and what message you want to convey. What is your mission? What is your passion? What do you want potential clients to remember about your business?

Make it simple, short, sweet and memorable. Your elevator pitch should:

- State who you are (use a distinctive title or phrase – a 'hook');
- Explain in the simplest terms possible what you do (one sentence if possible);
- Explain why you are the best; and
- Include a call to action (communicate your vision).

Be ready to give your elevator pitch quickly and succinctly at the booths, networking events and during breaks. Ensure that your message is understandable and demonstrates how your product/service relates to the needs of the corporate buyer. Practice until it sounds natural and comfortable; have your booth staff practice it as well. Use it during networking opportunities at the conference and on the trade mission when someone asks you what you do. *For more on elevator pitches, refer to the template on page 22.*

TO BE OR NOT TO BE...AN EXHIBITOR

Whether your business is large or small, participating in trade shows is an excellent way to raise your profile and increase your customer base. There is nothing more powerful than face-to-face interaction with target prospects to showcase your products or services and expertise, and one of the best ways to do this is by exhibiting at a booth on the show floor.

At the same time, there are also major challenges inherent in participating in a trade mission and conference/trade show simultaneously. Trade shows are expensive, and what's more, you will need to staff your booth with employees who are very capable and self-sufficient because you won't have the time to focus on it yourself. It's vital to get the most out of the time and money spent.

Should you decide to exhibit, one of the largest, and arguably most important, initial expenditures is the booth itself. Here are some pointers for developing the best exhibition:

- **Structure.** Exhibit construction has become a highly competitive business over the last few years, so be sure to shop around.



- **Portability.** Choose a visually-appealing exhibit that is light-weight, compact, easy to assemble, and which can even fit in a car. Not only do these clever units save on aggravation, but they are much cheaper to ship.
- **Durability.** Do you participate in overseas shows? If so, your booth needs to be tough enough to survive rough handling. Also consider the shelf-life you expect to get out of your exhibit. Do you really need it to last for the next five years, or should you invest in new graphics more frequently to reflect any new products or services?
- **Design.** A rule of thumb: include big, colourful and compelling images to entice visitors, and keep text to a minimum. One mistake to avoid is expecting the booth to deliver all your marketing and sales messages, which results in panels that are too copy heavy. The job of the booth is to draw in prospects. It's your job to sell them once they are there. Also remember that display tables often block the lower part of the exhibit, so all text should be in the top portion.

Make your booth a winner

Now that you're ready to exhibit at a show, here are some tips for getting the most out of it:

- **Get exhibit area information in advance.** Request an exhibit position in a high-traffic area away from direct competitors. Also, ask the organizers for an attendee list prior to the show and invite attendees to visit your booth or, even better, a hospitality suite that you host.
- **Train your team.** A trade show environment is different from other selling opportunities. Ensure your booth staff knows how to qualify visitors quickly, generate leads and work a show.
- **Offer a prize.** An easy and inexpensive way to obtain contact information is to collect attendee business cards in a bowl and draw for a prize. Give-aways are a good idea for brand reinforcement after attendees leave the show, but be sure to choose something related to your business – perhaps a handy reference chart or report you've prepared that will be referred to frequently and that will reinforce your expertise.



Section 2: At the event

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

Research and preparation is important, but it will only bring you so far. Business is based on creating and maintaining relationships. One of the greatest values of participating in a trade mission, especially in conjunction with a conference or trade show, is access to potentially key contacts you will meet while there. At an event like the WBENC conference, you will meet corporate buyers, diversity professionals and corporate members and sponsors of WEConnect Canada who often participate. You will also meet many other dynamic women business owners with whom business alliances can be struck.

Who to approach and how?

Here are some tips on networking during the event:

- **Talk to those who can help you**, such as your suppliers, who might be able to make introductions and connect you to the right people. Don't be afraid to be noticed and bring people together, you never know where connections will lead you.
- **Use your trade mission network**. That includes DFAIT representatives, WEConnect staff and corporate members, and other mission participants. Ask them to introduce you to contacts.
- **Get introduced to supplier diversity directors** who can be your champions or introduce you to the right people in your targeted companies. Don't be shy in asking them. They can also refer you to supplier diversity contacts at other corporations.
- **Visit booths of those you want to target**. Introduce yourself succinctly with your elevator pitch, focusing on the value you can bring. Don't leave a lot of material that can get lost in the shuffle - it's better to send that afterwards. Also, ask how they want to receive follow-up marketing material – electronically or in print?
- **Attend the right programs**. Attend the same programs as your targets to learn what is on their minds and how your solution can help problems or opportunities facing them.
- **Be an early bird**. Go to workshops early and network with other attendees. Maybe you can help each other in some way, whether in buying or selling or even teaming up to bid on a large contract.
- **Use your time wisely**. Booth time should only be targeted for immediate opportunities.
- **Attend relevant conference sessions**. The speakers are often high-level contacts in your target companies. Listen to their talks to gain insight on their strategy and procurement process and to learn what is on their minds; using this knowledge, try to determine how you can help them solve problems and capitalize on opportunities. Approach them afterwards if you need further information, an introduction or follow-up.
- **Don't forget to attend social events and receptions** where you have the opportunity to network with contacts more informally. Begin building relationships with corporate buyers and other key business people from the community.



- **Do market research.** You can add to your understanding of what's going on in your own marketplace – what your customers are looking for, but also what your competitors are up to.

How to network effectively

It's easy to say "get out there and network," but it's another thing to do it well. Many people assume that networking is about going to as many events as possible and handing out as many business cards as you can. But that could not be further from the truth. Here are some tips:

- **Be prepared.** Have your elevator pitch ready. Find out who will be there, what you are hoping to achieve and what you are willing to share in return.
- **Act like the host.** Don't use a networking opportunity to promote yourself too blatantly. Remember, it's also about engaging others. Listen, ask questions and act as a channel, introducing new contacts to others. Do not linger with friends and colleagues. Focus on connecting with new people.
- **End diplomatically.** This is easy if there is a mutual desire to meet again – such as agreeing to set up an appointment to get together. If you don't want to pursue anything with this person for whatever reason, end the conversation diplomatically by introducing them to someone else with whom they may have more in common.

Now that you know what to do, here are some don'ts:

- **DON'T forget your business cards.** To ensure that you've always got a card ready, keep a stash of business cards in various suit jackets, wallet, purse...anywhere that you might need to grab them.
- **DON'T keep score.** The basis of networking is to give without expectations. It's not about who owes who a favour. People have an uncanny ability to sniff out the scorekeepers and will want to steer clear.
- **DON'T be afraid to talk to strangers.** If you only talk to people you know, then how will you find new opportunities? Move out of your comfort zone! Besides, the shy person in the group may really appreciate it when you take them under your wing and introduce them to others.



YOUR MESSAGE: HOW TO DELIVER IT

While your Capability Statement is your most powerful document at one-on-one meetings, presenting your company's message effectively during other types of events is a different skill entirely. A business fair or trade show is often the energy engine of a conference. It can be your opportunity to see most of the corporate players in one place for your specific targets. For instance, with nearly 3,200 registered attendees in 2010, the WBENC business fair boasted more than 350 exhibitors, including 120 WBEs, representing the largest WBENC National Conference & Business Fair in the organization's history.

The trick at a trade show is to get noticed without pestering, to stay focused on your goals and to utilize your limited time as effectively as possible. Here are some tips for working the floor:

- **Go early.** Most corporate buyers are at their freshest in the morning, so seize the day. Try showing up early to events and speaker sessions to meet people and make connections.
- Try to **develop relationships** and find **mutually beneficial leverage points**. People do business with those they like and trust.
- Make sure you ask for **names of buyers/procurement people** if they are not at the booth when you visit.
- It will be busy and hectic. **Be quick and to the point**, and remember your elevator pitch – what is your value proposition to them, why you want to do business with them, and why a connection is mutually beneficial.
- If possible, find out where they are in the **sales cycle**, what an **average spend** is, and if there are any other **procurement events** coming up.
- **Don't inundate them with too much material.** This is where your postcard or one pager – or even just your business card – is most effective. Ask them if they want to receive any follow-up marketing material from you and whether they prefer it by email or print.
- **Take notes to put in your log later.** Writing notes on the back of their business cards can help you remember who said what.
- **Be prepared for the hard questions**, such as “what are your gross sales?” and “who are your top clients?”
- **Take advantage of PR and media opportunities.** Use the specialized media that attend the conference to get your message out, or invite them on a field trip to see your operations.
- If you are **thinking of exhibiting in the future**, look at the booths at the show and make note of what's working and what's not. Take ideas away, whether it be for brochures, booth design or which colours to use. You could even take pictures of booths you like.
- At the end of the trade show, go around the booths and **thank the key contacts**. Ask for their business card if you did not already get one.

Here is a brief list of trade show etiquette points worth remembering.



First, remember to:

- Provide your business card
- Use a firm handshake and make direct eye contact
- Advise if you are a current supplier
- Read body language and know when to move on (5 minutes is the maximum amount of time you should spend at a booth)

And here are some don'ts:

- **DON'T** be a bully or interrupt conversations
- **DON'T** shake hands when someone is eating
- **DON'T** be anxious or upset if you have met with a contact more than once and have had no results – it takes a lot of time to get into corporations
- **DON'T** say “I registered on your website but nothing has happened” – be patient
- **DON'T** speak loudly

PRESENTING YOURSELF DURING ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

These meetings will typically be set up in advance by the trade mission organizers. If the meetings are scheduled by DFAIT as part of the trade mission, as they will be in Las Vegas, you will be provided with an outline of your expectations and capabilities and a briefing by the person who is preparing your agenda.

It's good to have a sense of the time available. It can be a brief 15 minute meeting or up to an hour. For brief meetings, you should be very clear on what you wish to do next. Have your key questions ready.

The meetings are not always introductions regarding direct procurement but could be for prospective partners – distribution, representation or a strategic alliance. Make sure you know in advance what the party anticipates.

Here are some additional things to consider in presenting yourself, some of which were covered in the preparation section but which are worth repeating as they may come up during one-on-one meetings:

- **Goals** – What do you want to get out of it? What do you think the other party wants?
- **Alternatives** – What are your expectations and what alternatives does the other party have?
- **Deal breakers** – Determine what you really mustn't negotiate away. Know your bottom-line (have your pricing ready!).
- **Relationships** – Is there any relationship “history” that might support you, or connections you might have in common?



- **Learn** – Know how to ask questions. Find out as much as you can about who the other party currently sells or buys from as well as details like typical purchase cycle, size of orders, delivery expectations, criteria (e.g. samples prior to full order), pricing, etc.
- **Power** – Does the individual have the power to make the necessary decisions and deliver what you hope for? If not, who might you be referred to?
- **Pressures** – Are there any pressures working for or against you, for example, a time or financial constraint, competitors or a potential request for proposal?
- **Follow-up** – Be sure to follow up with anything promised, a thank you and a reminder of next steps. *(See sample template on page 25.)*

STAYING FOCUSED ON YOUR GOALS

Participating in a trade mission can be the beginning of an amazing journey. You never know who you'll meet or what opportunities may arise. When it is part of a conference or other major event, the takeaways for both you and your company can be enormous. Aim to get as much out of the experience as possible. One way to do this is to constantly remind yourself of your goals. At the same time, don't lose out on bonus gains, for instance:

- **Relationship building.** The face-to-face contact you get is invaluable in building fruitful, long-term relationships.
- **Speaker insights.** Speakers are often high-level contacts in your target companies. Not only will they have valuable business opinions to share, you might also get insights into their procurement processes.
- **Professional development.** Through conference sessions and people you meet, you'll gain valuable tips and advice on how to conduct your business.

Here are some quick thoughts on how to keep your eyes on the prize:

- **Get the business cards** of those you meet (be sure their name is actually listed on the card as sometimes these are just general procurement cards) and ask for contacts in the area of the company you are targeting.
- **Keep a log** of the contacts you've made and update it as often as you can. It's easy to forget details when you meet a lot of people.
- **Be patient.** Your first meeting may be very preliminary. It can take two to three years to land a contract.



Section 3: Post Event

IT AIN'T OVER 'CAUSE IT'S OVER

Despite the best intentions, post-event follow-up is where many falter. Be sure you have a follow-up plan for the contacts you meet that are part of the companies you are targeting. Respond to new contacts in a timely fashion – whether to set up that meeting or even just a brief ‘nice to have met you’ note. Remember to *always* send anything you may have promised, and do it when you say you will. Periodically passing on any information that may be valuable to people in their business is a good way to reinforce the relationship. The idea is to keep your company at the top of mind. Here are a few things to remember when planning your follow-ups:

- People like to do business with people they know;
- “No” means “not yet,” so stay connected.

There are a number of ways to keep connected. Remember to always get permission first, rather than inundating a prospect with unwanted material.

- If you have made a particularly good connection, put together a PowerPoint presentation (10 or so slides and include their logo) after the event and try to get a meeting with the supplier diversity person and buyer.
- If you are a service provider, show examples of your work and provide a list of clients and services you provide to them, as well as references.
- Create an e-mail campaign with relevant information on the industry or other points of mutual interest or send a periodic e-newsletter to the contacts you’ve made in your target companies.

It can take a couple years to get business from a large corporation, particularly multinationals. Be patient but persistent and stay on the radar with regular communication that will keep your company top of mind.

MANAGING LEADS AND FOLLOWING UP

It is very important to create a contact management system to track follow-up and progress with leads from the conference and trade show

- **Develop a strategy book** with information on your top 10 company targets at the conference. Prepare two pages of research on each company and what they sell. Include goals on what you want to achieve with each company.
- **Create a spreadsheet.** Make a spreadsheet with your target companies to keep track of your progress and next steps with each. Keep it as small and simple as possible so you don’t get overwhelmed with information.



- **Organize leads by product or service category.**
- **Try not to schedule your departures or flights immediately after the conference ends.** That way you have a window of time to follow-up with contacts and act on any other contingencies.
- **Immediately acknowledge everyone you met at the show** with an e-mail or call thanking them for coming to your booth and confirming they will receive the information they requested.
- After meeting a lead, **follow up within five days**; do not waste a potentially valuable opportunity.

Follow up on your leads while they are still hot and watch them turn into customers!

Conclusion

Good luck with your preparations for the upcoming trade mission and WBENC conference and business fair. Remember, you've made an important investment in your future, and the more you prepare for the upcoming event, the more successful you'll be in making valuable contacts and building business.

Check out www.businesswomenintrade.gc.ca and www.weconnectcanada.org, where you will find more information for women entrepreneurs and exporters that can help you prepare.

See you in Las Vegas!



Addendum

Tips from WBEs

Robina Bernard, President

Clik-Clik Systems Inc.

Mississauga, ON www.clik-клик.com

- Be sure to pre-register on the supplier diversity sites/vendor databases of corporations that will be exhibiting at the conferences you attend to make your discussions with them worthwhile. The first thing they will ask you when you meet them is if you have registered.
- Consider purchasing a booth for your company at conferences with trade fairs like the Canadian Aboriginal & Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC) (www.camsc.ca) annual conference. As part of this, CAMSC sets up appointments for you with corporate buyers at the event.
- Allow yourself extra time when you attend events to network with other certified WBEs and participants to explore ways you might help each other.

Diana Cuttell, President

IMI Material Handling Logistics Inc.

Orillia, ON www.imilogistics.com

- Before attending any of the WBENC events in the U.S., do your homework because every person there is a major Rolodex. Do research on the attendees to see if there is anyone you can network with and partner with in bidding on RFPs or in expanding services to your customers. You'll know immediately if they are receptive and if they are a good fit otherwise, move on. I limit myself to three such potential partners to focus and work on at any given time. Be sure you are talking to the owner of the company because you need the decision maker in order to bring a deal forward. Be prepared for questions like what are your gross sales and who are your top clients.

Leslie Meingast, President/CEO

The Personnel Department (Galt Western Personnel Ltd.)

Vancouver, BC www.goodstaff.com

- When you attend the WBENC conference and business fair for the first time, just take it all in to understand the magnitude and how much there is. If you plan to work the business fair, pick a maximum of two or three companies you want to target. Do some preparation ahead of time to learn about them and how your offering will meet their needs. Find an opportunity to get a warm contact so you can go back multiple times.



What Past Trade Mission Participants Have to Say

“The conference was inspiring, uplifting and an invitation to take networking up a notch. My U.S. buddy was amazing and introduced me all around, which was the biggest value for me. At this point, I’ve generated several leads and the potential for joint ventures. I recommend this event as it helps you get clearer on your ‘why’ in doing business.”

Judith Richardson, PONO Consultants International, Dartmouth, NS www.ponoconsultants.com

“The trade show is the most important part because that is where you meet potential buyers and can get a foot in the door.”

Wendy Banting, President, Secural Datashred, Toronto, ON www.secural.com

"We have already been successful with landing a contract with a member of the delegation. Had it not been for the mission, this would not have happened. We anticipate future opportunities and partnerships as a result of the contacts we made."

Tammy Moore, CEO, Touchpoint Agency, Kelowna, BC www.touchpoint-agency.com

“Great opportunity for identifying potential new clients, excellent networking opportunities and learning experience. Our Canadian delegation was an excellent group to learn from and share with.”

Bernice Walker, Corona College, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL www.coronacollege.com

“I loved it and would recommend it to anyone. The support that I received from everyone - WEConnect Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, NLOWE, the Centre for Women in Business in Halifax, DFAIT and all the women there was amazing and I commend everyone for the support and mentoring that was offered to me. I’m impressed with the quality of companies from Canada and the U.S. I met during the trade mission and very excited about working with them.”

Hilda Broomfield Letemplier, President, Pressure Pipe Steel Fabrication Ltd., Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL

“The first time I attended the WBENC conference, it really blew my mind in terms of what this is all about. It opened up a whole new universe.”

Margaret Ramsdale, President & CEO, Omega Uniform Systems Ltd., Vancouver, BC www.uniformsystems.com



Templates

Template: Develop your elevator pitch

Remember, your pitch shouldn't take much longer than 20 seconds.

Write a sentence that describes **who you are, what you do**, and be specific. The key is to give some insight into both your approach and the type of value you deliver.

For example:

"My name is X. My company is called X. We help businesses/consumers xxx (or We are experts at xxx, or, We produce xx)."

Now, write a single sentence that describes **why you are the best** at what you do, and be specific. The key here is to differentiate yourself from the competition. What makes you so special?

For example:

"Our widgets make it faster and easier for users to get the job of furniture refinishing done."

Or

"Our products not only make it easy for users to refinish furniture, but they do it cleanly and are more environmentally friendly than any in their class."

Now write down why you're the best. What is your unique selling proposition?

Next is the **call to action**. A pitch should engage the listener and get them to take an action – any action – that puts him or her on a trajectory to do what you want. For large conferences where people are busy and have been networking for quite a length of time, it's best to get to the point. State what you are looking for, for example, how to connect with a buyer, or the best way to follow up with specifics about what you can provide of benefit to them.

For example:

"I will be sure to send you my capability statement next week. Is email the best way to contact you? Or "My website is on my business card. There is a document in the resources section that speaks to what your customers are saying about xxx."



Template: Contacts follow up

It was a pleasure meeting you at the WBENC conference in Las Vegas last week.

[insert a personal note about something shared] e.g. I particularly enjoyed our conversation over lunch about xxxx.

[insert anything promised] e.g. I am attaching my Capability Statement, which you had indicated you would pass on to your procurement staff.

[insert next steps] e.g. as discussed, I will follow up with you in two weeks to get feedback from you.

Once again, it was great to meet and I look forward to connecting with you shortly.

[your contact information]