



***How to Get the Most
From Your Meeting***
Frank E. Hurtte, President
River Heights Consulting

General George Patton and Me...
Or an idea to get more from AHTD Spring 2006

Here you are in the airplane. You find your seat, stash your laptop in the already cramped overhead, sit down, and fasten your seat belt. The friendly stewardess is explaining how to find the emergency exit. A hush settles over the whole plane as you taxi out to the end of the runway. "Wow, finally through all the stuff at work and on the plane to Orlando" you think with a tired sigh. Your mind flashes another thought as you reach for the file folder stuck in your laptop bag, "now's a good time to read through all the 'propaganda' I got from AHTD during the last month and start to plan out my meeting." If this message finds you with a packet of snack pretzels somewhere around 25,000 feet, skip to the last paragraph. Otherwise, read on.....

Why are you coming any way?

If you are on your way to AHTD, you are a member of a very elite group. The people who attend these meetings are the leaders of their organizations. They understand the business, the marketing, the finances, and the relationships required to do business in a tightly focused sector of the North American economy. No matter how smart the Attorney (225/hour), CPA's (175/hour), or Banker's (?/hour) back home, none have the industry knowledge found in the folks you will be seeing in the next 72 hours. Most of us take pride in getting our money's worth. This article is all about getting your money's worth. These ideas are guaranteed to make you money and lifelong friends.

Before the meeting

This process starts a couple of weeks before the meeting. AHTD provides a printable registration list. Here you find the names and companies of the people you will see at the meeting. Print a copy of this list. As you go through the names, look for people you have heard of but don't know well. You may have seen these guys** names on distributor advisory boards or at some long forgotten manufacturers conference. You may have heard of their company but never met in person. Circle their name for later reference. Next, look for members you know well but haven't spoken to for a while. Again, circle their name. Look at locations; do any of these people call on remote locations of one of your key/target customers? Circle again.

As you review names, make a list of the things you wish you knew more about. To get your juices flowing here are some of my examples. How are specific products selling? What technology is John Deere (random example) using in the Florida plant? Or, how is the new CRM software working in a real life environment?

Use the phone number provided to call a few people on the list. (I generally do this via cell phone while driving, but hey I live in Iowa and the traffic is easy.) Here is my favorite wording (and you have my permission to use it). "Hey, while we are in Orlando could we get together at breakfast, lunch or during one of the breaks to talk about something? I would like to pick your brain on (your choice of topics) and I am afraid if we don't plan a time, we'll miss one another." This gives you at least 6 good opportunities to meet people you don't normally network with.

During the meeting

Carry your speakers guide with you and make notes on the people you meet. These apply to those chance acquaintances. Maybe it's the person you sit next to at breakfast or meet in the bar during a late evening "networking exercise". By the nametags they wear, you can determine who they work for and their title but often these quickie conversations allow you to find their common interests (business and personal). Here would be the kind of note you might make in your book next to my name; "Frank is Colonel Sanders looking guy from Iowa, worked for Allen-Bradley in the old days, knows distributors and Systems Integrators in a number of industries, not too bright but knows smart people". This quick note helps you remember the person and give you a resources for later reference.

As you attend the sessions refer to your list of questions. If you're like me, the excitement of the moment steals your words. I hate it when I walk up to Jim Norton (who is one of the smartest people I know) and all I can think of to say is "Well Jim how is business in Boston?" And, even though this makes good for idle chit chat, I believe you'll agree the "how's biz" question is about as lame as the old 70's standby "what's your sign?"

On the way home and after

On the way home from the meeting consolidate your notes. If there are action items that can be delegated, scratch out a hand written note or email you can pass to the right person. Now the hard part; look at the list of 15-20 good ideas you gathered from the meeting. Select the best two or three and set some action items for the following week. If one of those ideas came from a speaker, plan a call or email to them for additional clarifications. Experts tell us our retention fades with time. Most ideas from presentations have a half-life of one week. The best time for making plans is on the way home (before you arrive to an overflowing in-basket and tons of employee issues). Just the process of laying the first couple steps in the action plan will work to refresh the idea.

In summary, we all would like to move our businesses ahead plus have a great time at the Spring Meeting in Orlando. These few steps will add less than 30 minutes to your work load but the benefit for years to come. Years ago at an AHTD meeting in Kansas City, I heard a speaker quote General George Patton. He said, "A good plan violently executed today is better than a great plan executed next week." This is my own version of a good plan. If you execute it you will be miles ahead of our friend reading this on the plane....

If you are reading in the airplane----skip to here:

Have a great time in Orlando. The weather will be great and we should all have a great time.

** Guys: Gender neutral rural Iowan term of endearment.

Frank E. Hurtte
River Heights Consulting
226 Hillcrest
Davenport, Iowa 52803
563-514-1104 ph
www.riverheightsconsulting.com