

# The ROI of Attending an AHP Conference

Get the most out of attending “The Hunt for Excellence”

**12 ideas to make your investment in attending this conference worthwhile and learning more about the equine media business while leaving your work behind!**

*By Frank Lessiter, Editor, American Farriers Journal, and AHP Past President*

Over the years, I’ve attended hundreds of conferences and meetings along with organizing over 50 large attendance media-sponsored events. And I’ve learned a little planning can go a long way in determining how much you get out of attending events such as the annual American Horse Publications (AHP) Equine Media Conference.

While there is plenty of equine media education to be captured from each of the event’s speakers, there’s lots of additional learning to be gained from effectively networking with fellow attendees. Here are a few ideas gleaned from various sources and personal experiences to help you get the most out of attending this event.

## **1 Put down the phone — occasionally at least.**

We all have to check in via voicemail, email, texts, etc., but being at this AHP conference is a unique opportunity to network with and learn from equine media colleagues who you don’t see very often. Take advantage of it. When we’re off by ourselves, the tendency is to take out the phone. Resist the temptation and instead say “hi” to someone, as AHP attendees are a friendly and welcoming group.

## **2 Focus your attention on possible outcomes.**

Too many people think of networking as showing up, randomly interacting and hoping something good will happen. Instead, determine ahead of time what you want to accomplish while networking so you can communicate it to others and recognize it when you see or hear it.

## **3 Let others know what you need.**

Speaking with each of the sponsors during the AHP conference is a good idea, even if you may not think they have a direct link to your business. They know the equine market well and definitely want to know more about what you need to be successful in the equine media business.

## **4 Listen up.**

It’s easy to get distracted and think about what you’re going to say after a person you’re talking with finishes their point. Don’t let your mind take over and instead focus on what the people you’re with are saying, and chime in without pre-rehearsing what you’re going to say in your head. You’ll have the benefit of knowing exactly what people are saying, and giving them your full undivided attention. People will notice.

## **5 Articulate what your niche has enjoyed success with.**

Everyone is looking for ways to grow their business. So if you can clearly explain what you are doing well, others will do the same for you. And that will lead to a much better discussion.

## **6 Do advance research about attendees you want to connect with.**

Knowing something specific about those you may want to connect with always makes for a better conversation. The best opportunities are often squandered because someone is not prepared to talk. By being prepared you can think “big.”

## **7 Commit to meeting people you don't know.**

Anyone can say “hi” to old friends — and that’s certainly part of what makes the AHP meeting so great. But you also want to make new connections, too. Perhaps it’s a younger attendee who looks a little isolated. You can learn as much from them as you can from equine publishing veterans.

## **8 When you get a business card, write down what made you ask for the card.**

There are times when attendees empty their pockets after a long day at a conference, see a bunch of business cards and don’t remember what they were going to check on or follow up about. This will help remind you weeks later when you reach out to them.

## **9 Increase the probability of favorable outcomes.**

Script your daily schedule for meetings, breakfast, one-on-one discussions with speakers, visits with AHP sponsors, exercise, and other important items during the day.

## **10 Debrief throughout the event.**

Debrief throughout the event and digest everything on a daily basis. This will help you capture what is relevant and build your plan for what’s coming next. Do your homework before going home. Always carry the AHP program or a notepad and jot down everyone’s social media connections and contact information.

## **11 Know the AHP schedule!**

Have at least two sessions in mind for each breakout time slot. That way, if you get to one and the room is overflowing or the topic isn’t what you thought it would be, you can make the most of your time by immediately heading to your second choice.

## **12 Say hello, smile and be available.**

If you want to engage with fellow AHP attendees, try to look the part. You’re out of the daily publishing grind back home and are among your very smart peers. Enjoy yourself!

**For more conference tips, visit:**  
<https://www.americanhorsepubs.org/roi-attending-ahp-conference/>

## Still More AHP Conference Tips

- Plan to attend a few sessions outside your particular specialty to learn more about the overall equine media business.
- When you attend a session, don't sit with friends. Sit down and meet someone new on either side, since you never know where this will lead. Network with people with whom you might like to work or need to connect with in the future.
- Participate on social media with the AHP event hashtags. #AHPconference, #TheHuntforExcellence #AHPequinemedial
- Don't be afraid to speak up, ask questions of speakers, sponsors and other attendees. Make an effort to be noticed.
- Take time to check out the award-winning contest entries. Decide what made them winners and see what ideas you can pick up to improve your own efforts.
- Write your name on the AHP program and your note pad. If you lose your program or notes, someone may be able to return them to you or to the AHP registration area.
- Before the conference officially starts, explore the Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley in in Hunt Valley, Maryland and the meeting rooms. Keep the room maps handy so you know where each event is occurring.
- Schedule personal time to just get off your feet and relax briefly. This can be a real boost for recharging your battery.
- Stop by the AHP registration area for answers to all of your questions.
- Hopefully you brought 50 business cards. If so, be ready to distribute them to people who ask or want to trade cards.
- Make sure your mobile devices are fully charged in the morning. Turn off or silence your mobile device during sessions so you don't distract other attendees.
- After the meeting, remember to connect with your newfound friends. Connect with them on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Be sure you have joined the AHP Members Only group on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/americanhorsepublications/>