

Bane or Boon: The Professional Conference

Your “To Do List” is a mile long. Your workday seems to slide right into the evening, and the day never seems long enough.

So why, pray tell, should you spend a perfectly good workday at a conference? Eight hours. There is so much you can check off in that time. Why the distraction?

To be fair, conferences are not torture. Usually, there is good food, good company, and up-to-the-minute content and speakers. But many of us ask ourselves, may beat ourselves up, even as the conference is in session, second-guessing the value of spending the day in this way.

The cons seem clear:

Time.

Money.

To Do List.

Short day.

The pros are even more compelling.

Here is why:

Take a step back to move forward. Taking a day off to see the forest helps us get a better view of each tree that must be attended to in our businesses. In life, and in business, it is so easy to get sucked into the day to day, task by task, that taking time to sit back and look at the whole picture, the industry, the trends and shifts in markets

gives us a whole new perspective. With that in hand, we are better equipped to prioritize afresh and actually get more impact for our efforts.

Learn to earn: There is no end to knowledge, and the smart executive, business owner and employee is always on the lookout for learning opportunities. The professional conference is a conglomeration of high-quality, to-the-

improving your business model that you would not have thought of. The conference is the place to “taste” new ideas. Good follow up after a conference includes implementing the ideas that struck a chord, reading up on concepts discovered, and signing up for additional course work in a field you feel you can work at.

It’s all about your network: Networking is a big word. It’s banded about to mean

place and time to open the door to various connections.

Building partnerships: Because professional conferences bring together people interested in the same thing, it is a good place to look for potential employees, partners for your business and collaboration ideas to expand. Come prepared. What type of partnerships are you interested in now? What types of other businesses could be of interest? Then look out for the right people and leads and step up to the task.

Advertising: Professional conferences have multiple opportunities for advertising your business. You could take a sponsorship to get your ad space for all the attendees to see; you could rent a booth to showcase your offering; perhaps you have a valuable giveaway that will serve to advertise to potential clients, or you can advertise yourself and your business offering in less obvious ways, by maximizing the networking slots and by speaking up in discussions and workshops.

Yes, business conferences cost time and money, but when you figure the ROI – Return on Investment, it can turn out to be the best investment you made all year.



point learning sessions, geared to deliver information relevant to the attendees. If you pick well, the conferences you do attend will offer a smorgasbord of ideas, knowledge and tools that are relevant to you without overload or superfluous info. A conference helps you stuff the most learning into a short period of time. Use the opportunity to stretch and take a workshop not in your direct line of interest; you may discover a direction for growth or

many things. At a professional conference you can network in a number of ways and with various goals.

Making connections and meeting people: This more generalized form of networking allows you to meet many like-minded people quickly – you’re all at the conference together, after all. While you might not have specific goals in mind for how to maximize your relationship with each person you meet, this is a good

Most of the stories are actually day to day occurrences, not breathtaking dramas. The angels of tzedakah accompany our children 24 hours a day and remove the obstacles in their paths. Just when something urgent seems to get stuck, the donation “fixes” it: A child begins to daven with fervency, a high fever goes down in the middle of the night, an important test goes well, the Mashgiach gives a good report, the math notebook begins to fill up, there is nachas from the grandchildren. ... Banal episodes that might even be a bit boring. A donation to Vaad Harabanim, and just then, everything works out! It’s our routine reality. Every one of us has a private collection with multitudes of stories about the angels of tzedakah.

That is one kind of story. Then there’s another type. There are incidents that can never be forgotten: The despair is mounting, all avenues have been exhausted, and suddenly, one donation to the tzedakah fund of Gedolei Hador turns anguish to joy in an open miracle. These are times when we clearly see the Hand of Hashem. All the facts scream the opposite, but the power of tzedakah rules in favor of life.

Those are the types of stories we’d like to share here.

Hivtacht V’noshati in Every Situation

Thinking about Hivtacht V’noshati is very moving. A Jew encounters a problem, and one contribution to the Vaad Harabanim connects him directly to the Creator of the Universe. Promise and see yeshuos, contribute and be blessed.

Currents of Rescue

Shloimy went out to switch off the main circuit breaker, and Yehudah went over to the light. They had to work something out before Sukkos, otherwise they would not have any light in the sukkah. Yehudah was sure the circuit had been switched off already, and he touched an exposed electric wire.

His body trembled violently. The electric current threw him to the floor and he writhed uncontrollably, the electricity raging through him wildly.

“When I felt the end was near,” Yehudah related later, “I pledged to give NIS 100 to Vaad Harabanim. That second, the current stopped!”

He got up from the floor, dazed and dizzy. His palms had black marks on the spots where he had touched the wire. The family doctor referred him for testing, and at the hospital they told him that the electricity had passed through his entire body. “The burns on both hands prove it. The current entered through one hand, worked its way through your body, and emerged through the other hand. We don’t understand how you are alive!” They were truly amazed. But Yehudah understood. It was the tzedakah that saved him from death.

I’m Not Donating!

“I have laryngitis,” the organist said in a whisper, clearing his throat repeatedly. “I won’t be able to come and sing today. I’m very sorry.”

The dial tone was jarring as Chaim stood with the receiver still in his hand, shocked. No band! The Mashgiach had relied on him, entrusting him with organizing the *simchas beis hasho’eivah*, and now, everyone would come from all over the country, *bachurim*, *Ramim*, *Roshei Yeshivah* ... and there would be no music for them!

He called the two friends who were in charge of the evening with him. “Listen, there’s no keyboard player. Let’s divide the list of potential players among us and each will call one-third of the list.”

It was lunchtime already. The three *bachurim* sat down near the phones, and began to dial endless numbers. But they were met with constant refusals; no one was available that night.

Uneasily, Chaim called the Mashgiach and told him what had happened. “Nu,” the Mashgiach replied. “What’s with Vaad Harabanim? Did you donate money yet?”

Chaim snickered. He had never believed in this kind of thing. ... The Mashgiach was unmoved. “I can’t force you to do something you don’t believe in.

If you don’t want to, don’t give.” Chaim told himself that he really didn’t believe, and that’s why he refused to donate.

Hashem will help ... Chaim sighed. He decided to go and arrange the refreshments. As he walked, a car stopped beside him and a friendly voice called out, “Do you want a ride to Rabi Akiva Street?” Sure he did. Chaim was happy not to have to continue walking in the Bnei Brak heat. On the way, he told the driver about the embarrassment he was sure to face that evening.

“Listen,” the driver said. “I have a relative who recently moved here from overseas. He’s a professional player, but he hasn’t advertised much since he got here. Let me call him for you now.”

The organist was available ... without the Vaad Harabanim or other such nonsense.

Now Chaim dialed the Mashgiach and told him about the miracle. The Mashgiach was very happy. “Nu, do you see the power of Vaad Harabanim!”

“I didn’t donate!” Chaim reminded him.

“You didn’t donate,” the Mashgiach said. “But I did. As soon as I hung up the phone with you, I contributed to Vaad Harabanim.”

Let the Boy Behave

A child wrote to Vaad Harabanim

with a similar story. This is what he wrote:

“I wanted to tell you a story whose title is “Tzedakah and the slide show.” My married sister produces slide shows for events. Once, she worked very hard on a show, and when the time came for the event to start, she put in the disc and ... nothing happened!

“My sister got very nervous. She went pale and felt ill. Suddenly, someone put the disc in again – and it worked. No one knew why it hadn’t worked before and then started working. Suddenly they heard someone laughing from the kitchen of the hall where the event was being held.

“It turned out that while the disc was not working, someone there promised NIS 50 to Vaad Harabanim, and in that merit, the disc began to work.”

Another sweet childish story: “One day, I came to class as usual. When my *rebbe* came, we began to daven. Then we began to learn. One boy – and I won’t say his name – didn’t behave nicely. The *rebbe* told him to stop, but the boy didn’t listen. The *rebbe* said: ‘This boy is not being good. There’s nothing to do.’ Then he thought for a few minutes and said that we have to give money to Vaad Harabanim. He called Vaad Harabanim on the speakerphone and said, ‘I want to donate NIS 15 so that this boy will behave.’ Five minutes later we all saw how the boy began to behave and to read from the *sefer*.”

