



How to Maximize Return on Investment (ROI) of In-Person Events

There is no substitute for an in-person event to advance your professional skills, expand your network, and enhance your business development opportunities. But if you do not plan to strategically take advantage of these opportunities, then an event is just wasted time away from your office and family.

What are the most common mistakes (we all make)?

- Not setting goals/planning for success
- Not outlining a strategy based on the agenda/attendee list
- Not taking the time to build genuine relationships (aka going straight to an ASK when meeting someone)
- Not preparing your elevator speech to have ready when connecting with people
- Not crafting a few general and/or specific questions to have ready when connecting with people
- Not feeling confident about networking (i.e., feeling anxious, stressed, nervous, uncomfortable, intimidated)

But with a little time invested before an event, you can gain significant value from each interaction and opportunity. Below are some tips to optimize the return on your SCG Legal meeting investment before, during, and after an event.

BEFORE > Setting Up for Success

- ❑ **Begin with the End in Mind.** As soon as you register for an event, block time on your calendar immediately after the event – for when you are back in the office – to review notes you made on site, to follow up/through on outreach promises, to develop strategies that capitalize on connections made, and/or to address opportunities missed.
- ❑ **Set Goals.** Set one goal for the meeting and – this next part is important – *write it down*. Make the goal realistic and attainable (e.g., meet a specific person, arrange one client referral, meet individuals in your practice area with whom you can collaborate on a webinar or podcast like [SCG Global Spin](#)). Ready some topics to talk about (i.e., general news, industry news, a recent article you read that is thematic to the agenda) and prepare some general and agenda-specific questions to help break the ice and find common ground.
- ❑ **Update Your Online Profile/s.** At a minimum, ensure your biography on your firm's website and your LinkedIn profile are up to date with your current contact information and professional highlights. SCG Legal links to these profiles for the event attendee list, mobile app, and in pre/post-event communications.
- ❑ **Download the App.** SCG Legal has a mobile app (available year-round) that hosts a list of the Voting Representatives for each member firm as well as attendee information for meetings (available ~30 days before and up to ~120 days after each event). Be sure to download it as soon as possible/no later than a week before the event. Become familiar with its menu and features. If your details are included, be sure they are correct. (If not, please email corrections to scgadmin@scglegal.com.) Use this resource to become familiar with your fellow members/attendees. **Be sure you allow for *Notifications* so you are aware of any last-minute changes to the agenda and/or special activities.**
- ❑ **Know the Agenda.** Familiarize yourself with the event agenda and add any 'not to be missed' sessions and/or social activities into your calendar. If more than one person from your firm is attending the event, consider splitting up attendance for some agenda items while attending others together. Example: If two or more people from your firm are attending a SCG Legal Midyear or Annual meeting, be sure everyone splits up into different reservations for the No Host Dinners to maximize your firm's participation value and networking opportunities.

Image: Networking by Ranksof Graphics (Flaticon)

- ❑ **Prepare Your Elevator Speech.** Often the pace of an event agenda means connecting with people (by design or chance) occurs between sessions/activities. Being able to quickly, clearly, and concisely communicate your interest in and/or value to an in-the-moment or future opportunity is essential.
- ❑ **Know the Attendees.** An attendee list is released (via email to registered participants and via the mobile app) ~30 days before each SCG Legal event. Research your fellow attendees, speakers, sponsors, etc. – anyone with whom you are interested in connecting. If appropriate, reach out ahead of the event and try to pre-arrange a time/place to meet. Typically, SCG Legal has set aside additional space for attendees to connect before, during, and after events. Please email Membership Coordinator Erin Kane (ekane@scglegal.com) if you are interested in reserving space.
- ❑ **Adopt an ‘Out of Office’ Mindset.** If you are going to attend an event, do your best to commit your mind as well as your time. Put an ‘out of office’ message on your email/voicemail letting people know your response will be delayed and/or who else they can reach in your absence. If appropriate, include the name and location of the event you are attending. This may produce an unexpected opportunity to connect over a shared interest or because of proximity.
- ❑ **Think Outside the Event.** As soon as you register for an event, look through your current/prospective client list to see who lives/works around the event location. Reach out and see if you can schedule an in-person opportunity while you are in town. Also, review the attendee list for attorneys from the SCG Legal member host firm. If the list is missing an attorney from the member host firm you have worked with in the past or want to work with in the future, reach out and try to schedule time to connect with them while you are in town.

DURING > Make the Most of Your Time

- ❑ **Ask for Support.** Once on site, ask to meet whomever is the point person for event attendees. Don’t hesitate to seek their assistance to help you connect with specific people.
- ❑ **Be Early and Be Present.** Arriving early for sessions and social events enables you to get comfortable with the setting, to seek out and spend more time with people as they arrive, and to send a subtle signal of professionalism through punctuality. During sessions, pay attention to the presenters, not just because it’s the polite thing to do (and you paid for the experience), but because being present and attentive will help you connect with your fellow attendees. Also, plan to attend all the sessions, including and especially the last session on the agenda. SCG Legal’s Midyear and Annual meetings are designed to provide maximum benefit in an efficient 1.5-day format. The agenda is created by members for members, so there is great value to immersing yourself fully in the experience.
- ❑ **Prepare to Break the Ice.** To help start a conversation or revive one that’s stalled, have a few basic/general open-ended (i.e., can’t be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’) questions at the ready that you can ask any time...but especially during networking activities. You will walk into these situations with much more confidence if you have at least three questions prepared. Examples: What do you think the next panel will be focusing on? What are your thoughts on the last presentation? What do you feel is your firm’s strategic advantage? Who are some of the clients your firm represents? What are your firm’s top practice areas? How did you choose your practice area? What do you like to do in your spare time? What organizations/industry groups – besides SCG Legal – are you involved with?
- ❑ **Give Before You Get.** Before you ask for...anything...make a concerted effort to understand and appreciate the business interests and strategic focus of your fellow attendees. Offer to connect them (if/as possible) with a prospective client or advantageous business associate or to co-host an event, co-author a thought leadership article, or produce an [SCG Global Spin](#) podcast with them. Members who collaborate with one another tend to build trust more quickly, which often leads more rapidly to shared business opportunities.

- ❑ **Mix and Mingle.** If you are attending an event with a firm colleague, plan to connect when necessary to compare notes, but make it a strategy to not sit/stand together during sessions, breaks, meals (including No Host Dinners), and social events. Lean into the goal of expanding your network through organic interactions primed through mutual involvement with SCG Legal and attendance at the same event.
- ❑ **Meet and Move On.** It's very tempting to hold onto a conversation when it's going *really* well, especially if you're talking to THE reason for attending an event. But just as you have a plan for your time at the event and a list of people you want to meet, so do others. Learn to gracefully exit an exchange by making plans to connect again at a later date/time.
- ❑ **Be Social.** Feel free to post about your event experience (sessions, social activities, etc.) on your social media accounts and tag @scglegal. Be sure to follow [SCG Legal's LinkedIn](#) page and comment on/share posts as/when appropriate. When you meet people, let them know you will – and then make sure you do! – connect with them on LinkedIn. Include a note with your connection request to remind them where you met or of something you have in common or share with them a recent news item/article you think they would find interesting.

AFTER > Follow Up. Follow Through.

- ❑ **Reflect and Organize.** Use your return travel time to review event notes and prioritize follow-up activities.
- ❑ **Just Do It.** You spent the time and money to attend the event, but the real value comes after...when everyone disperses back to the office/daily life. Use that post-event time you blocked off time on your calendar to make the calls, send the emails, forward the articles and invites, schedule the meetings, make the introductions, set up the collaborative activities, etc. **Bonus Ideas:** Invite connections to a relevant webinar hosted by another practice in your firm. Or send them an industry analysis by a well-respected non-competitor (e.g., McKinsey & Company, World Health Organization). Be sure to follow up and ask for their thoughts on the content. Use their feedback to stay connected with them.
- ❑ **Keep It Simple.** Just as you came back to an avalanche of emails and work waiting for your attention, so did others. Your immediate follow-up doesn't have to be the whole strategy plan for every connection. A quick 'great meeting you' or 'thank you for your time' works wonders. And don't forget to connect via LinkedIn (or another appropriate medium).
- ❑ **Keep Your Promises.** If you said you would do it (i.e., send/share an article, invite, introduction, etc.), DO IT. **So many people fail to do this** that...this simple act alone can sometimes be the most economical and effective way to gain trust and earn business opportunities.
- ❑ **Plan the Work, Work the Plan.** Include all prospects/connections in your business development plan – assigning each one a level of importance that corresponds to a specific set up of follow-up activities – so they don't fall through the cracks. Sometimes it's that 'one more' outreach that converts a previous conversation into a profitable connection.
- ❑ **Sharing is Caring.** Since it's unlikely everyone from your office/team will attend an event, organize a 'lunch and learn' or send an email with a summary (as appropriate) of what/who you saw, intel you gathered, etc. Convert hardcopies of event materials to electronic formats for dissemination and share, if/as possible, links to session recordings.
- ❑ **Answer the Post-Event Survey.** SCG Legal's events are one of the most tangible expressions of the benefits of membership in the organization. Please take the time to provide your feedback on these activities so they can continue to drive value through maximum professional and business development opportunities.

****Please email Membership Coordinate Erin Kane (ekane@scglegal.com) with questions/suggestions related to this resource.****

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