

EDITOR'S CORNER

The Arts and Science of Attending Scientific Meetings

I just attended national meetings of the American Society for Microbiology and Institute of Food Technologists and have some thoughts about attending national and international symposia, meetings, and congresses.

A. Pre-Meeting Preparations

1. Send in registration form, scientific abstracts, and money as soon as possible (ASAP) to guarantee a place in the congress, scientific program, banquet, social events, and tours. Always stay in the "host" hotel. Registrations can now be done using credit cards and fax.
2. Be sure you have a current passport and valid visa. Know the regulations about bringing alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and perfumes to a foreign country.
3. Bring half the amount of luggage and twice the money you think you need.

B. Travel to and from during the Trip

1. Always keep your travel documents, money, tickets, and slides with you. Never entrust these important things to another traveler.
2. Always get to the airport, train station, or pier EARLY. Missing a plane is no fun!!
3. Do not drink local water. Drink bottled water. Beer and wine are better. Eat hot food and drink hot soup.
4. Rest well on the trip but TIE your immediate belongings (handbag, travel tote bag, camera, etc.) to your body while sleeping.
5. Make friends along the way but do not get so involved as to forget your own plans and belongings. Always look back at least once after you leave a seat to ensure that you did not forget anything.
6. Always take an approved taxi and ask about the cost before getting into the taxi for a trip. Better still, have someone meet you at the airport.
7. Have about US \$100.00 in local currency before entering a new country. This will bail you out in case you get lost.
8. Fill in all landing documents before landing.

9. Hand in legal documents to immigration officers politely. Smile. The less you talk the better. Long hair and beard (for men), dark glasses, and black leather jacket may delay your passage through customs.

C. At the Meeting Site

1. After settling in at the hotel, go to the meeting registration place ASAP to get your package of information.

2. Put your name on all proceedings, programs, conference bags, etc. Bring a magic marker for this purpose.

3. Always wear your name badge during the entire meeting, including social events. Pin the badge on the TOP RIGHT side of your coat or jacket because when you shake hands (usually right hands) with a person, the person will be able to see your name immediately and vice versa.

4. Go through the programs and see if you have some friends in the meeting and also familiarize yourself with the date, time, building name, and room number for programs you want to attend. Mark them clearly. Always go to the meeting room 30 min early if you are giving a talk to make sure slide projector, screen, and overhead projector are in good order and of the same style that you have.

5. You will meet three classes of people: those you *know well* (no problem), those you *do not know at all* (no problem), and those you *vaguely remember* (may be a source of embarrassment). I always approach people of the last class by saying "I am Daniel Fung . . .". Do not expect people from this class to know you. When in doubt, address a person as "Dr.". You will not go too far wrong.

6. In social "mixers," try not to engage in lengthy discussions, because people like to mingle and greet as many people as possible. Say a few pleasantries and move on.

D. After the Meeting

1. Write a "thank you" letter to your host. Send greetings to all the people you met and have addresses for. I always bring about 300 business cards to national meetings.

2. If you promised someone something (a book, a reprint, a friend's address, etc.), send them ASAP.

3. Send in your reimbursement request ASAP before you lose or misplace your valuable airplane ticket, taxi, dinner, registration receipts, etc. The sooner you send in the request, the sooner you will get your money back!

These are just some common sense items, but they might make your meeting more enjoyable.

Bon Voyage!

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