



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Build Serious Business Partnerships at Travel Conferences

Very exciting week this week. I'm calling you from the side of the highway between TBEX in Huntsville, Alabama and a workshop we're doing in Atlanta. And we're going to talk about how to build serious business partnerships at conferences.

So, this webinar idea came out of some emails I got, and some emails I didn't get, and some conversations I had at a string of travel conferences that I've been at in the last week. So, I've been at three before now, and now, I'm at TBEX, and I've been at some writing conferences, some blogging conferences, some that are just for women, some that are in the U.S., some that are in Europe.

It's been a very wide variety. And while obviously there are cultural differences and adherence in all of these different locations and different types of travel media, there's certain things that are the same. And there's a lot of opportunities that I feel a lot of folks are missing out on. So, that's what we're going to look at today. How to make sure you are best taking advantage of the opportunities that you have set yourself up for when you have spent this money to go to these conferences in the first place.

All right. So, specifically what I want to talk about is what are the different travel conferences that you can go to and what you can get out of them because this is a question that I really get a lot. Sometimes people say, "Should I go to TBEX, or what's the best conference to go to if I want to be learning how to write better or how to pitch better?" And so, I'm going to talk about the spectrum there.

After that, we're going to talk about the before part. So, some of you have probably just come from the Women in Travel Summit. Some of you are on your way to TBEX, which starts tonight. So, people might be in different places. Or it might be that you had gone to a travel conference last year, and you haven't really followed up too much, and you're wondering what you should do about that. Is it too late? Can you still reach out for those opportunities?

And so, we're going to talk about how to prep, and then we're going to talk about the follow-up formula. So, I'm not going to give you a specific template for this because it needs to be quite personal, and we're going to talk about that as well. So, let's get going.

So, When I talk about conferences today, I'm not talking about very small sort of intimate writing things. I'm talking more about large events and also expos we're going to look at because those are big things that I know a lot of you guys are missing out on. And some folks



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are wondering if they should be going to these. Oh, Naomi, how interesting that you're going to the Adventure of Travel Show.

But I myself, it's kind of a joke with another friend of mine who goes to a lot of conferences, who goes to more. But in addition to going to a lot of conferences for travel writing, I go to a lot of conferences for small business and for freelancing.

But I also cover conferences for magazines. So, I've spent the last couple years writing for magazines for people who plan meetings and conferences. So, I've also spent a lot of time writing about the best practices for people who are looking to create conferences and make sure that you have those opportunities. So, I have a lot of insights both from the high level as well as from on the ground. So, before we dive into the specific conferences to look at, how to prepare for them, and how to follow up on them.

Why should you be going to these in the first place? Because I definitely know that while I'm obviously meeting people at conferences, when we are searching out for people to invite to different events that we're doing around the country, there's a lot of people who don't know about a conference that might be in their backyard starting that very weekend.

If you aren't already making space in your budget and time in your schedule to be attending these kind of events, why should you look at doing it? So, I really think there's four main reasons, and these can also help you evaluate whether a conference is the right opportunity for you personally because I think often we're in the position where we might go to a conference because it's near us, or as travel writers, because it's in a place where we want to go, and we want to go on the FAM trips, right.

That's a great reason to go to a travel conference; because you want to go on the FAM trips. And there's just a lot, and I'm going to show you on another slide how many of them there are because you might only know a few. But there's a lot of these conferences. So, how do you decide which ones are worth it for you? I think there's four main reasons to go, and you need to make sure that any conference that you're looking at investing in is going to check at least two, if not three, or preferably all four of these boxes for you.

The first one is connection. Whether you are working already full-time as a freelance travel writer, as I know some of you are, or you are looking at making that jump, connection is one of the big, big reasons to go to these conferences. In fact, my husband always asks me



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because I always complain about TBEX, and how I don't really like the sessions, and things like this, or how it was very poorly organized. And he says to me, "Why do you keep going?"

And I say, "It's because all of my travel friends are there. I know that I will go and I will see everybody in one go." And he's an academic, and he has several conferences that he goes to every year, whether he has a paper in it or not, because those are the places where he is going to see all of his colleagues every year. And so, this is really important. Being part of a community, we can do it online, right.

In fact, somebody at the TBEX Speaker's Party last night was joking, "We shouldn't have people's names on their badges. We should just have which Facebook groups they're in because that's really how you know them." And the thing is, though, that those connections that you make online are cemented in person. There's this maxim that people don't do business with businesses, people do business with people. And that's very true.

But the other thing is that making connections with people can allow you to leap — oops, sorry — to leapfrog — oh, no, where'd we go — to leapfrog a lot of steps in terms of setting up partnerships. Whether that is with other bloggers, or with brands and destinations that you would like to be blogging for, and writing for, and doing social media for. So, the power of that in-person connection is huge.

I say unquantifiable, but the meetings industry, the associations for meeting planners, have put a lot of effort into quantifying this in light of the fact that after the financial crash, the government was penalizing finance companies for all sorts of expenditures, and one of them was on travel for things like incentive trips. And an incentive trip, if you don't know what this is, it's a really quirky thing.

It's when people who work in sales for a big company exceed their goals. Their price that they get, like their reward, is that they get to go on these really awesome trips to really fantastic places around the world, or in the Caribbean with their family, and there's shopping, and there's casino nights, and there's all these things. And so, on the one hand, you can look at going to travel conferences as a place to network, and that the connection is for a networking reason.

On the other hand, it's also important to spend time, like these finance companies that I just mentioned, enjoying yourself with your peers. This is really important, and this is where the best connections are made. It's not just because you're at a networking event, but it's because



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you're on a trip with somebody before the conference, and you guys are enjoying a tour together, or a meal, or something like that.

This connection, what kind of benefit does it have for you, right? People think of networking and, "Oh, I have to network," but what do you actually get out of it? Because this is the really important part, not just in deciding which conferences to go to, but also who to reach out to while you were there, and how to follow up with them. The types of connections that you should be making are a couple-fold. You want to be looking at three different types of people.

You want to look at people who are above you, but not too far above you. You want to look at people who are on the same level as you. And you want to be looking at people who might be a couple steps behind you. So, these are the three types of people that you want to be looking at connecting with when you're at conferences. So, when I say people who are above you, but not too far above you, here's the reason for that.

Is that you can go to a conference and go to a talk by a big person, and maybe say hi to them afterwards, and maybe follow up with them on email, but the chance of having a lasting connection with somebody who's quite a few steps ahead of you in their own travel writing business is much slimmer, unless you've really had time to make — spent hours, and hours, and hours with them. And that's often hard to do because these conferences are very busy.

But the thing is if somebody is just a little bit ahead of you, and you guys connect over something, like you both went to school in Italy, it's a lot easier to build a strong relationship there. Or that person is going to mentor you, and send you leads on business opportunities, and connect you to people that they know. People who are on the same level as you, this is what I was saying about you might be in a lot of Facebook groups.

But having a beer with those people and sitting down and getting to know them makes you become the person that they refer when they can't go on a trip, and the person organizing the FAM asks them, "Is there somebody else that you know that we can invite?" So, even if you know a lot of peers in a loose tie sort of way online, getting to know them in person is what makes you become a go-to person.

Whether it's when someone asks them for a recommendation, or if they're looking at doing something, like they're looking at setting up a blog or group that will work together with destinations to go on FAMs. Now, what about people below you? I think this is one that people often miss. So, even if you think that you are relatively new to travel writing or to



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blogging, it's really important to cultivate relationships with people who are a little bit earlier in their trajectory than you are, and to help them along.

And the reason for that is two-fold. First of all, it's really great for them, of course, to give them information, but the other thing is that teaching is a great way to cement what you know. And also, to help you feel confident about what you know and where you are in your journey. So, helping answer questions, or if somebody — if you're both waiting to speak to a speaker after a talk, chat somebody up.

See if there's somebody that you can introduce them to, to help them leapfrog much faster along in their journey. So, possibility. Now, this is a really interesting one. When I was doing our freelance travel writing master class in New York this week, one of the attendees really aptly said that she had come because she wanted to see the possibilities of what she could be doing with her travel writing career and income specifically that she didn't already know about.

And I thought that was so great because I think that people often go to travel events whether it's a conference like TBEX or an expo in particularly like World Travel Market and ITB. And we're going to talk about those. And they leave with this concept of, "Oh, my God. I had no idea how much was out there. How many opportunities there are. How many destinations I want to visit. How many places I hadn't thought that I could be writing for."

In my opinion, one of the best reasons, and one of the things that will make you move forward the fastest about going to travel conferences is to imbue yourself with a sense of possibility of where you can take your career. Because that's often going to be the thing that pushes you to leave the job you already have, or if you do a lot of different types of freelancing, like if you also freelance in the medical field, or do science writing, or technical writing.

This can be the thing that shows you that all these years, you thought, "Well, I'm going to keep doing technical writing because there's just not that much travel writing that I could be doing," that shows you that there really is, and that your skills are transferable. Now, education. This is an interesting one, and I think it was April earlier had said which are the best conferences for travel writing.

And this is quite interesting because a lot of the conferences that folk go to aren't actually about travel writing. There's very few that are. And I'll tell you which ones are good for that.



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But the thing is that the education component of a lot of these events is something that you need to make for yourself. In some cases, the education comes from networking with other people.

But in other cases, especially expo events like World Travel Market and ITB, there are so many different things going on. There's press releases. There's thousands of booths that you can go to. And there are education sessions, but they're easy to miss. So, this is one of the reasons why I said these are four reasons to go to conferences, but you're not always going to go for all of them because education is very important.

And it can be a really great way for you to do what would've taken you six or eight weeks to learn in two days, but not every event offers it. And so, if education is a priority for you, you have to be really picky about which events you're going to because, like I said, they don't all cater to that. But going to a conference is really one of the best ways to really fast track your learning about travel writing, about travel writing business. Now, a cold hard opportunity.

This is an interesting one because I think a lot of people don't go to conferences specifically with this in mind. They might think, "Oh, well, I'll go to some speed dating appointments, and hopefully, something will come of it." But they don't think, "I have a spot in my client portfolio that I need to fill with a travel company that I'm going to be blogging for at least four times a month, or at least eight times a month."

And going into an event specifically looking for an opportunity like that and specifically evaluating which events to go to based on whether or not those opportunities will exist. And this right here is the one that I would say, above all of these other ones, you need to have as at least one of the things that drive you to go to conferences because a lot of people go just for this. They go just for connection. And like I was saying, that's great.

It can help you with business partnerships, and it's also an important reward for your hard work. But the thing is, if you aren't actually doing paid work, you don't get to do the connecting just for awarding purposes yet. So, what I recommend is that if you are fresh, if you are new to travel writing, if you haven't gone to any events yet, look for ones that are going to help you with education and possibility, and hopefully, also opportunities.

If you've been doing it for a while, don't worry about this one. Don't worry so much about this one. But look for the opportunities that have the best connection to people that you already know from online that you can meet in person, as well as new people you can meet,



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and the best opportunities. So, let's look at the different conferences. There's really three different kinds. And I mentioned expos, and I'm going to show you what I mean on the next page.

I have a big, long list of all of them. But expos are essentially events that are not for travel media as a goal. Travel media are there to cover the event and to get exposure for the destinations. But expos are primarily for buyers and sellers. And so, what does that mean? People who buy and sell travel might be people who are travel agents, people who do group bus tours, people who do bookings for companies. All sorts of people who are buying travel in large amounts.

And then the sellers would be hotels, they would be tour operators, they would be airlines, all sorts of people. So, when you go to an expo, it's a crazy experience, and there's tons of stuff going on. But the real meat of it, the real heart of it, is one to one meetings between these buyers and sellers that I just explained getting their business done, getting their rates, getting their sales, getting their packages put together for the rest of the year.

For us, that stuff doesn't matter, but it's important to remember that that is really the goal of these events. That is what they are set up for, and those are the type of goals they are targeting. And if you want to go as media, you need to understand that to get a free pass, you need to be somehow functioning in that setting. So, what that means is if you want to go — like I said, the two big ones are World Travel Market, which is in London in the Fall, and ITB Berlin, which is in Berlin in March.

If you want to go to one of those two things, you need to be showing that you are going to be covering the things that you learned there. Not that you are just going to do business for yourself because then they are going to want you to buy your own ticket. So, this is important to remember about expos. However, the flip side to that is that expos are the single best way to get that possibility download that I mentioned before to see the sheer number of tourism boards, of travel companies, of travel tech startups, of things that are out there that need your writing.

If you have never been to one of these, I highly, highly, highly recommend it. There are also some smaller ones around regionally. There's one that's on luxury, and again, I'll show you more of these in the next page. The second type of event is, like I mentioned, ones that don't have so much education, but are very networking-oriented that are for writers specifically. And these often have press trips attached that are before and/or after the event.



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Those tend to be ones that are attached to travel writing associations, but there are also ones for travel bloggers. So, TBEX, for instance, is a good example of that. Now, the next bucket here, and this is probably the smallest bucket, is education-oriented events. And these are going to be the types of things where you can go and get like a master's in travel blogging or travel writing over the course of the weekend.

Not officially, but essentially. So, this is pulled from my book "The Six-Figure Travel Writing Roadmap". This is a huge list of all of the different — and, in fact, there's probably some that aren't even on here, but all of the major events that would benefit travel writers in some way, shape, or form. So, some of these, like I said, are going to be association events. And there are some on here that are expos. I mentioned ITB and World Travel Market. And then there's also the International Luxury Travel Market.

So, some of the good ones for education purposes, specifically about travel writing, the top two that I would recommend are one is not on here because I just found out about it this year, but it's one that I just came back from.

It's called Travel and Words, and it's typically in the Pacific Northwest. But the other one is the Book Passage Travel Writers and Photographers Conference. Now, this one I don't always recommend to everybody because the event itself is pricey, and the hotels there are pricey, and it's not in the most interesting location. And there's also not trips associated with it.

It's not necessarily going to be the right choice for all of you. But another one that's similar in terms of focusing on travel education that's not on here, like I said, because it's new, is Travel and Words, and I'm going to put this over here so you can see it. And this is my new favorite recommendation if you are looking for a conference about how to be a travel writer. They have panels of editors that are telling you how to pitch them, what to pitch them.

They've got freelance writers from all different parts of their career who are telling you different types of magazines you want to be writing for and how to write for them, who are telling you how to set up your business, all sorts of things. So, that's really great for how to be a travel writer. Another place where you could pitch people is Travel Classics. It's kind of an interesting event. It's a very small group but there's a lot of big editors.

But I've heard from people that the editors will let you pitch them there, but then they don't actually necessarily follow up on the pitches. So, this is also going to be another one that's



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quite expensive, and I'm not necessarily sure if it's right for the price tag. But pretty much all the other ones on here as media, you're able to go at a very reduced, if not free, rate.

For instance, the Eye on Travel Conference, which is going to be about sort of advances in travel, New York TravFest is another one where you can go as media if you're going to be covering the event. And somebody on this side had mentioned that they went to that. That has all sorts of panels about all sorts of things. It has responsible travel. It has disable travel. It's very both trend and panel-oriented.

It can be a really great place to learn. World Travel Market, as I mentioned, is the one that's in the Fall in London. And then there's a lot of ones in blogging. So, there's Traverse, which I just went to, which for the education component, was really, really great. There's the TBEX conferences, which now have some new conference instructors, and they're really working hard on their education.

The different association conferences that I mentioned which are good for FAM trips and for networking, but not necessarily so much for education, would be the Society of American Travel Writers. There's the North American Travel Journalists Association. Another one that I don't have on here is the International Food, Wine, and Travel Writers Association Conference, and there's some in other places as well.

If you specialize in a specific area, like if you'd like to work with more tourism boards, DMAI is the association for tourism boards in America — and actually North America, I think. And so, at their annual convention, there's going to be a lot of tourism boards that you can network with. And if you're interested in doing different types of marketing, content marketing, for businesses, it's important to not just go to the conferences that are for travel writers.

But go to the conferences that are for the clients that you want to be working for. So, if you want to be working for tourism boards, like I said, DMAI is a good place to go. If you want to be writing for travel tech companies, which pay well and always need content, Eye for Travel is a great place to go. If you want to be writing for luxury travel companies like tour operators, Luxury Travel Market is a great place to go.

I've got a question on this side from somebody who is attending an entrepreneur tech conference and has a media invitation. So, if you're going to these differently focused conferences which are about a slice of travel, or that are more towards the business side,



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everything I'm going to say in this call completely still holds true. The most important thing is just to ensure before you get there that it's the right conference for you and who you want to meet when you're there.

Let's get into that. So, how do you prep and then work on the ground to make sure that you are getting the most out of these experiences? I think there's really five main steps. So, the first one is to decide what is your goal. And this always surprises me when I'm at conferences and people tell me that they don't really know why they're there. Have any of you guys ever felt like this or heard somebody say this?

Drop it over here in the chat box. But I've heard this not just from attendees, but I've heard this actually from sponsors, and it cracks me up. I've been at a couple trade shows and also at TBEX, and gone to the speed networking, which if you don't know what speed networking is. This is where in some conferences, and it's becoming more prevalent, they have an opportunity for sponsors and attendees to have very short, sometimes longer, but they're usually between five and ten-minutes appointments.

And during these appointments, it's a little bit of a shit show, pardon my language. But the whole idea is that you're pitching each other. And this comes from, like I was saying about a lot of the original travel trade shows have things for buyers and sellers. And there, they go, and they're prepared, and they're ready to do business, and they know what to do. But in a lot of these travel conferences, sponsors are there.

They haven't quite prepared for the speed networking. And so, you kind of sit down and they either tell you all about what they're doing with no idea how that actually works for you. Or they say, "Well, tell me about you." So, if you want me to talk specifically more about how to ace speed networking, drop that in the questions box, and I'll get to that later because I don't want to talk about that specifically because it's something that not all conferences have.

But one of the important things, whether you're doing speed networking or not, is to set a goal of what you want to do there, and make sure that you know who is going to be at the event that will help you meet your goal. Okay? So, if you have the opportunity to do speed networking or other sort of appointment setting in advance, you can email those people and try to set up an appointment. Or you can go into the speed networking app instead of an appointment.



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But otherwise, it's up to you to figure out who is going to be there. So, how do you do this? So, let's say, if anybody has a conference they're going to and a goal, drop it to the side, and I'll workshop that as well, but I'm just going to make one up for now. So, let's say you've gone to Travel and Words, which is this conference that I was just at. They have a ton, a ton, a ton, a ton of destinations there that are from the Pacific Northwest.

Perhaps you've gone to that event knowing that you would like to plant a great big trip around that area, and that you want to set up as many sponsored stays as possible between a certain set of dates around a particular type of travel that interests you. And let's call it like craft, food, wine, and beer. Okay? Great area for that. So, you have gone to that conference with that goal in mind that you're not there just to meet people.

You are there to meet people who can help you with story ideas and with sponsored travel for this trip that you would like to do in the Fall of this year. Okay? So, then what you're going to do is you're going to look at everybody that's — on step two — you're going to look at everybody who's sponsoring the event and see which of those sponsors best fit your agenda. How do they fit in terms of geography? If you have four weeks, you can really spend all sorts of time and rural Washington and Oregon and make it over to Idaho.

But if you only have one week, you need to do things that are much closer together. So, you're going to create a hit list, I like to call it a hit list, of the people that are your high priority networking targets for the event. And so, in this case, it would be the sponsors or along a certain route that you can accomplish in one week for your trip. And then you're going to plant the seeds.

Like I said, if there's a speed networking component attached to the conference that you're going to be attending, then planting the seeds is really simple, right. You just set up a speed networking appointment. No. Planting the seeds goes much, much deeper than just reaching out to somebody and asking if you can meet with them at the event. So, here is what I recommend.

Whether you want to be meeting destinations, tourism boards, if you want to be meeting companies, or if you want to be meeting other big bloggers, or if you want to be meeting other people who are on the same level as you. Whatever type of person fits into your goal, to plant the seeds about two weeks a month out from the event, start following them on social. Start liking what they're doing, start commenting on their websites or on their photos.



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That is planting the seeds because setting up a meeting has not endeared the person to you. It hasn't given them multiple sort of flashes of your name in order to recognize you and associate you with something. And it's not necessarily going to be enough for them to go look you up and figure out how you can work together. But if you maintain yourself as a little bug in their ear for a little while leading up to the conference, then by the time you get there, they're like, "Oh, yeah."

And even if they never ever saw you online before a week ago, now, as far as their concerned, you're like online friends, and they're super excited to see you. Now, I have keep your eye on the prize here, and this is really for when you get to the event. So, I find especially if you're going to a very large event. So, for instance, the World Travel Market or ITB, which are these large expos that I was talking about.

If you're going to a very large event, it's very, very easy to get swept up in all of the stuff that's going on. If you go to an expo, there's going to be hundreds or thousands of exquisitely created booths. Sometimes there's three stories of booths, and there's parties, and there's first-class airplane seats to sit in. And there's people giving you away all sorts of quite nice swag and things like that.

It's very easy to forget who was on your hit list. And the fact that if you don't have a meeting set with them, you need to be bumping into them. Or that you need to be also finding people who aren't on your hit list because you didn't know in advance that they were going to be there, but they funnel into your goal. So, one of the most important reasons to set a goal for yourself before you actually land on the ground is so that you don't get distracted by shiny, or edible, or drinkable objects that are fantastic because the thing is, like I said — and I don't want to go back to the earlier side.

But like I said when I said there's four reasons to go to conferences, the one that needs to be associated with each conference you go to is cold hard opportunities. And the reason for that is that you need to have a return on investment for these things that you are going to. And the reason for that is that it's way, way, way too easy — and I see this happen a lot in our master classes. It's just way too easy to spend a lot of time networking, a lot of time talking to people about kind of opportunities, and never close them.

If you are going to conferences without knowing what type of opportunity you are looking for without deciding in advance what type of person you need to be talking about for that opportunity, you're going to have a grand time attending these things and just find that you have more friends and less money. But not necessarily a path to do something with those



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connections. So, as you're there, and you're keeping the eye on the prize, or your eye on the prize, which is your prize, in fact, it's also important not to put too much pressure on those interactions.

Okay? I see sometimes people who are trying to close a deal on the ground with somebody that they met five minutes ago. Or even somebody that they perhaps have been following online before, but they haven't quite gotten the person's attention enough, and then they go up to the person at the conference and just expect that now they're best friends. It's very, very important to take the temperature of the people that you are trying to get in touch with and not necessarily — when I say take the temperature, I don't mean like if they seem busy, to assume that they're interested.

But I mean to see how far they are in the pipeline of having a partnership of some kind with you, of having whether it's a friendship that's a referral friendship, or if it's a brand that you want to be writing for, or if it's destination that you want to have to take you on a trip. But it's really important to keep in mind that everyone is completely strapped for time at these events. Inaudible

It's not that I'm saying that people are going to be wasted drunk, but between all of these different factors that are happening, it can be really hard to remember, even if you had a really great conversation, that you may have promised something, or you may have had a plan for something. And then now you as a person who went there hoping to work together on this, and that person has essentially forgot. And that leads to very, very, very awkward, and uncomfortable, and typically negative conversations.

When I say don't put too much pressure on these meetings, what I mean is that focus on the connecting aspect. You definitely do want to be making sure that you are meeting people who are related to your goals, and that you are making sure that you spent time with them on the ground. But don't spend too much time discussing business. This is the weird thing, right. I'm talking about setting business goals and making sure that you go to conferences with a business goal in mind and not go to ones that don't fit your business goals.

But at the same time, you need to go there and essentially discuss business as little as possible, like 5% of the time. And here's the weird reason for that. It's like I said, people do business with people. So, they will remember so much better that you guys talked for half an hour about your different study abroad experiences in Italy, and that you recommended all of these places for them to go with their kids the next time that they're in Italy, and that you gave them the name of the restaurant, and that you told them the story about the owner.



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They will remember that so much more than this Instagram class that you were talking to them about doing together. Okay? So, when we don't put pressure on the first meeting, what that means is that there's a lot of pressure on our follow up. And this is the area where I see a lot of people start to fall off. So, I want to talk about that. But I've got a couple questions here on the side. Okay.

We've got "I'd like to make a public Twitter list and add people to that, so they get a notification that you're doing that. It also makes it easier for me to keep up with the right people by just looking at this list." Now, I like this tip, and I get added to these Twitter lists a lot, and I see them, but the thing that I find interesting about the Twitter list is that when I see that somebody has added me to a Twitter list, and I go to it in my notifications.

Like, I go to the Twitter list, and you see who else is on the Twitter list, but it doesn't necessarily endear you to that person as much as if the person has been thoughtfully commenting on your post, or liking them regularly, or things like that. So, while having a Twitter list is useful for you to follow people, I don't find being on the receiving end of that that it's quite as ingratiating as some of these other things that you can do.

And, by the way, speaking of ingratiating, if you want to be really, really, really ingratiating, find an article that somebody has written not on their blog, but like an actual article. And even if it's old — sorry, it just started raining. Tell me if you have trouble hearing me. But email them — everybody has their email on their website or a contact form — and tell them that you read this article and you really like it. You would not believe how infrequently that happens.

And I've always noticed I just do it because I like to do it, but I always notice that when I do that, people are just like floored. Like, people don't get that that often. So, if somebody writes for BBC, or USA Today Road Warrior's Blog, or something like that, find out. That is the best way for them to remember you. Okay, a couple more questions. "I'm not a big fan of Facebook. Is that your preferred method for social media?" I am also not a big fan of Facebook, Michelle, and sometimes people Facebook message me, and I probably see it like three months later.

I think some people are really into Facebook. Some people these days are really into Instagram. I notice that a lot of people, instead of direct messaging to find people at conferences over Twitter, now people are often doing it through Instagram. So, it's really different for everybody. And how do you find that because on most people's blogs, they'll have all of their different social handles listed. I think this is just kind of a tossup.



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And you can go and see how active they are, but the thing is that people schedule things, so that's not still the best metric. But if they have Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter all up there, I would see perhaps what they're posting real-time things on, and that's probably their preferred method. But it's different. Like, I really only use Twitter. And some people these days are just really big on Instagram.

My friend Kirwin, who I think is also playing hooky from TBEX right now to be on the call, I believe is pretty good on Facebook. Kirwin, chime in if that's not true. But a lot of people are on most networks. Especially anybody who's a blogger, you really have to be checking in on all of them. So, I think it matters a little bit less what's the preferred method rather than the one that they're most likely to be looking at. I know that there was one more question earlier. Okay.

Someone wanted some more information about speed networking. So, this speed networking stuff is, like I said, an offshoot of something that's a buyer program that has been in a lot of these travel conferences for a long time.

But in the media side, it's never to have these one-on-one media appointments. And so, as I mentioned, often it's not very clear to all parties involved what is supposed to happen. And I actually have something on the follow up that's kind of related to this. But you don't want to be in these meetings a Silicon Valley startup who is looking for VC funding and spews the elevator pitch at everybody they possibly can, and here's why.

The key to acing speed dating is to forget for a moment what your goal is and concentrate as hard as possible until you know the answer on what the other person's goal is. Because you might have a really fantastic pitch prepared and some really interesting stuff going on, but if they are there for a completely different purpose that doesn't mesh with that, you're just going to be operating in different planes.

So, what I like to do is I sit down, and no matter what they say first, I always pivot it. And like if they ask me a question, I say, "Well, before I answer that, I would love to know what brought you guys here and why you're meeting with people and what are you are looking to find out." Because this allows you to change what you're saying to fit that. And I've had this lead to some really interesting stuff.

I've had some people who are actually at TBEX because they are looking for people to write for their blog, and as I mentioned in the newsletter and the blog post leading up to this call,



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this is very, very common now. And nobody is talking about that. All these bloggers come up, and they just think that the company is there either to do affiliate sales or to like put them on a free trip. But they're actually looking for writers.

They typically, for the last like ten people who've been coming to speed dating with them sit there and listen to people's pitch, and then sort of write down whether they like the person or not, but don't really know whether that person can write from them. So, in other cases, you'll find people who aren't able to set up trips, and they're only there to give information about their destination.

This is also really important because if you sit down, and you are there to set up your trip, and you're like, "So, I'm coming these days, and like what can I do during that time and everything?" But they aren't able to set that up for you, they're going to tell you all sorts of things to do, and you might think that they're going to help you with them, but they're actually not. So, my number, number one tip for speed dating is to start by figuring out what they want, and then change whatever you're going to say around that to make the most of unifying their goal with your background.

Okay. So, like I said, I knew I had a slide about the speed dating. So, my other pet peeve. I told you my favorite tip, but my pet peeve about speed dating, and I have been on both sides of this now, having sponsored a few conferences. My pet peeve about speed dating is people who are paper pushers. Now, what do I mean by this? So, people who are paper pushers sit down at your table, and they open like their folder, and this happens on both sides.

Destinations and companies do it, and writers do it as well. And they open like their folder, their press trip, whatever, their press kit, and they just start telling you all these things that are on the paper. Two things are happening here. First of all, what am I going to do with that paper? Like, honestly, we have file — what do you call them — file cabinets at home where I put all these papers that I get at these events, and they just sit there, and I never look at them again.

No matter how much I liked you, the information should be digital. And a lot of exhibitors are starting to understand this, but I don't find as many bloggers do it. So, don't use paper. So, what do I mean by that? First of all, you want to send them things after the fact, but second of all, on your phone, if you have like a big Samsung Galaxy or on your iPad, if you have it, have a little mini slide show. Like everything that would be in these papers you want to show, but have it on the screen.



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And then here's what I do. So, I find out, like I said, what they're interested in. I move it to the correct slide. I give them my iPad, and I say, "Okay, here. Great. This is what you need to know about me." I give it to them, and they can scan it in like 30 seconds. And then while they're doing that, I get my business cards, I give them my business card, and they get their business cards. Now, they have some appropriate background on me.

I know what they're looking for, and now we can start to talk because the second problem with being a paper pusher is that I find that people are just giving me a guided tour of these lecture materials about them, and there is no connection happening. And when you only have a very scarce, scant, and very precious number of minutes to make these connections, you can't be doing that.

So, the magic happens, the business happens, the closing happens, on the follow up, not at the event, like I said before. So — oops, sorry. In terms of follow up, I have five tips here, and then I'm going to give you a little formula, but like I said, the formula is a little flexible because it needs to be quite personalized. So, the biggest, biggest, biggest, biggest, biggest most important thing about following up is that it should be about you as little as humanely possible.

You should only be mentioned in the context of the relationship that you had with the person at the event. And otherwise, it should be about them. And I think that this is hard. And I think sometimes we sit down, and we write these emails with what we want to tell them, and then if you don't already do this, you should always look at your emails and make sure the first word of every paragraph isn't the same. But you sit down and you look at it, and every paragraph starts with I.

I wanted, like I'm doing, I just, I something. They're all I sentences, and this is not a good way to ingratiate yourself to somebody. And you might think, "Well, I had a great connection with this person. Why do I have to write them this very cold email-type email of ingratiating myself to them?" Because now they're home. Because you're not with them anymore, and because people have psychological triggers. And when there's an email all about them, it simply makes them much happier.

It's really just that easy. So, I can't even remember who it was from, and this is quite telling that even though I basically collect this information, I can't even tell you who sent me this email. But somebody sent me an email after a conference recently, and it was literally just about where they're going on their around the world trip, and these are their handles, and I should follow them, and this and another thing. I had no idea why I was getting that email.



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You never want someone to not know why they are getting your email. So, that's the next point. Don't let your email lack a reason for reaching out. And a next step, someone should never ever, ever have your email and be wondering why they got it first of all. Okay? That's a big bad. But the second thing is even if you make it clear why you're sending them that email, like I said, it shouldn't be about you.

It should be about them, and it should also have a next step because saying, "Oh, I just wanted to let you know blah, blah, blah, blah," is the end of a conversation. And if you want this email to be the beginning of a conversation, the beginning of a great, beautiful conversation that leads to money for all of you. So, what that means is that you need to have some sort of plan, some sort of steps, and just like I recommend with pitching, I recommend closing your pitch email by saying, "Would you be interested in blah, blah, blah article?"

Make sure that you end your follow up conference emails with a question, and make it an easy question. So, that question could be, "Would you like to talk more about this?" That question could be, "Could I send you some more information about this?" That question could be, "Can we set up a time for me to interview for this podcast?" All sorts of things.

But the reason you want to end with a question, especially if there's a somewhat significant amount of information in your email, is to keep them from sort of falling into reading mode, and then just flipping to the next email. You want to get them to respond, and the best way to do that is to outline your plan so they know what they're signing up for, and give them a very easy question so that they can just say, "Yeah, that sounds great. Thanks. Let me know what time works for you. Okay?"

Number three, don't clutter your follow up with too many requests or pieces of information, especially not about what you're doing. Okay? So, like I said, these emails of, "Here are all the things that are going on with me, and I am doing this book, and doing that thing, and this other thing, and this other thing, and this other thing, and this other thing, and this other thing," are very common. I've gotten them from other conferences before as well.

But besides being all about you, one of the most important issues with those is that you force people into this read-only mode, even if they're interested. Where they're not interacting, they're not really considering how this applies to you, they are taking in information. And you want these follow ups to continue the conversation that you spent time and effort and invested in starting at the event. So, just like you wanted to go to the conference in the first place with a very clear goal in mind, you want — especially your first follow up email.



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You don't have to be as strict about this in the future ones. But you want your first follow up email to be short and to one point, just one point. So, like I said, it could be that you are asking if you can send them more information about something you discussed at the conference. It could be you're asking if you could set up a time for a follow up as the opportunity to discuss 27 other different things that you think you should work on with this person. Take small steps.

And there's an important reason for this as well. And I'm going to just go forward to the last slide. So, this is because there is psychological power in asking for things. And this works two ways. There's power in asking for things and somebody doing a small thing, and now, you create a cycle of yes's. Okay? But there's also a power in doing things for somebody else. Okay?

Just the same as if you asked somebody to set up an interview for your podcast, you are going to feel that you like them and you want to do something else for them, it works the other way. So, I highly recommend that you close your follow up email by offering that person something because there's a lot of studies that show that when somebody helps you, you feel indebted to them. But it also works both ways. When you help somebody, you also care about what happens to them.

Just as much as you're sending these emails and you're asking people to do things for you, or work on partnerships with you, or if you can blog for them, and all sorts of things like that, you also need to make sure it's a two-way street because you don't want to get into the situation where you feel like, "Oh, I wrote these people, and I followed up with them a couple times, and I haven't heard back, and they're horrible people." You want to remember that great connection that you had.

And one of the ways to do it is to keep the conversation and the connection upbeat at all times. So, some people do this at the end of every single email they ever send, and they're brilliant, brilliant people who have a lot of connective capability, but it's most important on the first email. So, you want to offer them something. And on the next slide about how to put together an email, I'm going to talk about what that can be. But let's just go back to the fourth don't for a second. Don't forget to remind them how you met.

This is actually what should go at the top of your email, and we're going to look at it again when I do the slide about the formula. But they might remember your face and not your name. They might remember your blog and not your name. It is so easy for that black and white email to come that has no relationship whatsoever to this great interaction that you had



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over drinks in this little topless bar in the steps of The Old City of Girona when it was the first time that you saw The Old City of Girona in the whole conference.

And everybody was just so excited to be in this beautiful place. Your black and white email has nothing to do with that. And it's so easy if you just start writing this email and referencing how you want to work together for them to forget who you are, and how you met, and that they like you. So, this is the number, number one thing that you want to put in your email. So, here is how you should put it together.

Start by talking about how you met. And this is important. If it was a bit mundane, if you kind of just met at a cocktail bar, or at a cocktail party rather, it's a conference, find a way to make it interesting. And hopefully, you made it interesting at the time. Hopefully, you found a way to bring up something that you had in common. Like I said, this should typically be something social, not something business-oriented.

Like that you both studied in the same country, you traveled the same country, or you went to the same college, or you know the same person, or you visited the same town, or you're from the same town, something like that. That sticks much better than something business-oriented. But if you didn't do that when you were there, you can find a great way to do it in your email as well. So, the way to do this would be to tie in something else.

Maybe you met them at this party at the conference, and there wasn't anything particularly significant about your meeting, but you could mention something else about the party that was interesting. You could mention an observation. You can say like, "Wasn't that Big Bird character that they had walking around taking selfies with everyone just hilarious?"

But make that intro to your email when you're reminding them that you guys met. Make it interesting, make it positive. And this is important because when somebody is opening a cold email, the beginning of the email has the most important of all function of getting them to keep reading. So, it's very common for these emails to start with, "Hi, so and so introduced me to you at such and such conference. It was great to meet you."

I'm bored. A lot of people will just keep reading, but hopefully, the people that you're trying to make these big partnerships and deals with, and write for, and work on programs together, hopefully, they're big people who have busy inboxes. And to stand out in them, and particularly to make them excited to say yes to the question you're going to ask at the end of your email, you want to start off on a positive note.



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Now, once you've done that, you want to get right to the point, and you want to tell them why you're writing, and what are the next steps about that one thing that you want to do with them. Again, don't put everything that's going on in your life. Don't put every plan that you want to do with this person or this business. Just that one thing that we're going to focus on in this follow up email.

No more information. Nothing about where you're traveling to next. Nothing about where to follow you. And then add some value for them. So, this can be an introduction. So, let's say — okay. So, there's somebody here from a destination, it's a pretty big city, I met them at the Women in Travel Summit. They are looking at starting a very interesting, specific blog that's about meeting planning actually.

And they need somebody with a background both in leisure travel and with connections to meeting planners. Okay? So, what I might do after the Women in Travel Summit is email them, and remind them that we met, and about this funny thing that we had discussed. And then say, "I'm writing to follow up on that conversation that we had about this blog that you're interested in starting about interesting information for meeting planners."

Okay? "I would love to talk to you at TBEX, where we're both going to be now, about that, and I'm sending you this e-networking request so that we can meet." Now, the extra information I would give is — here's a couple examples of the type of blog post that I think that you guys should be looking at doing for you to check out. And then at the end, I would say, "Do you have time for us to meet at TBEX? Thanks." And that's it, and that would be the whole email.

Okay, a question over here. "Regarding the next step, what if some of the connections you made aren't people you want to work with immediately, but you still want to follow up on?" Thank you so much. That's a great question. So, this is really important because these connections, I found that — we were just talking last night how many TBEXs some of us had been to, and I found that it can take like three or four years of repeat seeing people at conferences before you're like super close just from seeing them at conferences with no in between follow up whatsoever.

If there's somebody that you might want to do something with later, or even just that you have a really great connection with, you want to still do this, and the next step should be something like hopping on the phone, inviting them to a webinar that some other person is doing that is really interesting that they might like. And then talking about how it went



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afterwards, telling them that you're going to another conference, and would they like you to send them some tips.

The next step can be social. The next step can be helping them develop their business. The next step doesn't necessarily have to be, "Let's set up a phone call to discuss that blog that you're looking at starting."

If you have any questions, let me know at questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com. And I have just a couple other questions over here that I want to answer quickly. So, one that came in over email that I thought was really interesting, and I don't think she's on the call, so I want to make sure I get to it, is that she said that she was at World Travel Market in London and realized that most brands where travel companies approached her were interested in figuring out whether or not she had a strong blog.

But no one mentioned anything about writing on their own blog. So, this is a really interesting one because like I said in the earlier — in the newsletter and the blog preceding this, this is new. That people are realizing that when they go to these blogging conferences, they should be looking for bloggers right for them. And a lot of people still don't know how to do it, and don't really know what questions to ask, and things like this.

As I mentioned when we were talking about speed networking, this also applies just when you're walking around to different exhibitors and having a chat. You need to ask them what they're there for. And I also — if I'm looking for blogging work, I tend to ask them what sort of content they have on their own site, and who produces it, and what's the strategic plan for that, and if they have any needs coming up. So, that's one thing that you can do.

Another question was, "If you have a very specific expertise, for instance, like you are in Greece, and that's basically the area that you write about, do you just engage with companies from that area? Or when you go to a show..." And this is especially for trade shows. "Do you talk to people from other areas of the world, or other types of travel that you're not necessarily knowledgeable about?" I really like to use these shows to find new areas that I might be interested in breaking into.

And the thing is that often you can break into those areas because that person has a writing need that you can fill. So, I definitely recommend walking around and seeing who else is there. For instance, somebody who is here at TBEX was at the TBEX in Israel about a month back, and he lives in the Midwest, and he wasn't necessarily thinking, "I'm going to do a big



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Israel content project,” so much as he went because he was speaking at TBEX, and now, he was like two or three Israel content projects that he’s working on.

And he had no plans for that. He had no idea that they had the money to support the type of projects that he did or anything like that. So, this goes back to what I said earlier about possibility. One of the best reasons to go to these events is to explore what else is out there. And you might find yourself pivoting to something that really interests you that you didn’t even know interested you before.

So, if there’s not any other questions, I’m going to sign off and skedaddle over to my master class. And I will see some of you at the TBEX party later tonight.