



Meetings Made Easy

Making the most of MustMeet networking

A short introduction for Event Organizers to MustMeet networking

Tips and techniques for running the best networking for your Customers and their Delegates.

© 2009 MustMeet.com.
Reproduction or redistribution allowed in original form only.
Extracts by permission of MustMeet.com – contact feedback@mustmeet.com

Contents

Introduction	3
Networking: Face-to-face is still the best way.....	3
Pre-Event	4
Should you include networking?	4
What type of networking?	4
Ad Hoc Networking	4
Planned Networking.....	4
Structured Networking.....	4
Make networking a feature	5
Invite Delegates to Network	5
Set up MustMeet for your event	5
Preparation and Planning.....	5
Access to information	5
Delegate and Exhibitor information	5
Send reminders.....	5
Itineraries.....	6
Reporting.....	6
During the Event.....	7
Venue Planning.....	7
Meeting Desk	7
Meeting Areas or Rendezvous Point?	7
Meeting Areas and Meeting Points	7
Rendezvous Point.....	7
Events with Exhibition Space.....	8
Post Event.....	8
Follow up on your networking	8
MustMeet Access.....	8
Conclusion	8
About MustMeet	8

Introduction

Networking: Face-to-face is still the best way

Networking is consistently ranked by Delegates as one of *the* major benefits of attending business events – and yet most Delegates find networking difficult. They are uncomfortable starting conversations with strangers and do not know how to move on and ‘work the room’ to find the best contacts for their business.

Most events capitalize on this interest in networking by offering dedicated times in the agenda and spaces in the venue for networking. Even so, we’ve all attended events where you are left standing around with many other delegates, hoping to meet the person that can add value to your business and justify the cost of time out of the office. They may be standing next to you just waiting for an introduction; more likely they are the other side of the event and you will never meet by chance.

The growth of social networking in this age of the internet and email continues apace. Yet even here the value of face-to-face networking is recognised with many articles promoting the benefits of combining your on-line activities with personal connections. After all, even the newest ‘virtual world’ communities have an annual physical get together here in the old fashioned ‘real world’.

Face-to-face meetings arranged by MustMeet answer many of these conflicting needs and can make a real difference to your business events. MustMeet ensures your Delegates get the maximum value from the time they invest in your event by helping them network with peers, partners and potential new customers. And we’ve found that MustMeet networking makes Delegates open to networking and encourages more informal contact and conversation. Delegates have told us they have saved months of calling and chasing with meetings arranged at events where their prospects are attending.

This short paper shows you how to make the most out of running face-to-face networking at your events.

Pre-Event

Should you include networking?

Of course, everyone who attends any event 'networks' – even if its only with exhibitors at trade shows. What we're talking about is encouraging more structured networking and planning time and space in the event to allow it. Ask yourself the following:

- Does my audience want or expect to network at my event?
- Do my exhibitors want to know more about the Delegates they may meet?
- Do I have time in the agenda and space in the venue to allow networking?

If you answer yes, or even maybe, then you should think about offering networking at your event. If you really want to add value for your delegates then MustMeet.com is the most cost-effective service.

What type of networking?

Ad Hoc Networking

For smaller business events, it may be enough for you to just give Delegates enough coffee and lunch breaks to get to know each other. But wouldn't it be nice to give them the chance to understand who else is attending and decide who they should be meeting with? With your Delegates and presenters listed on MustMeet, everyone can see before they arrive who may be available to meet them – in many cases reminding themselves of people they may have met with briefly before.

Planned Networking

You can improve networking for your Delegates by setting aside space and time at your event specifically for networking. Many business events pack so much in that there is little time for Delegates to just meet and talk; many more don't allow space for just mingling or seating areas to allow for ad hoc meetings.

At Exhibitions and Tradeshows space for networking is often provided by sponsored areas, including bar and café areas. These areas can prove challenging for serious networkers since they are usually busy enough with visitors there for the refreshment value rather than networking. Much better is to have areas dedicated and free for networking.

And don't forget name badges with names writ LARGE make it easy for Delegates to avoid embarrassing staring at their fellow Delegates – particularly ones they may have met before but can't recall. If you can print on both sides so you can always read their name even when the badge has turned around, so much the better.

Structured Networking

Once you've set aside time and space for networking and really made it a key aspect of your event, you can put some structure behind it. There are many ways to make it easy for your Delegates and help them make the best use of their time at your event – for example if local legislation allows, include a list of delegates' names and companies in your delegate pack to help Delegates look for specific individuals; set up specific rendezvous or meeting points where Delegates know they can arrange to meet others.

MustMeet.com is designed for structured networking. MustMeet allows Delegates to register their name and company plus a complete profile of themselves and the type of person or company they would like to meet, plus keywords to help other Delegates find them. Our management controls, opt-in and privacy policy take care of how Delegates agree to share their contact details; powerful search and listing features make it very easy for Delegates to find the right people to meet with; a familiar Diary function makes booking meetings simple. And MustMeet handles multiple meeting areas as well as giving Delegates the option to specify their own meeting location – so Delegates know exactly when and where to meet.

Make networking a feature

If you're going to give over valuable time from your agenda and potentially purchase additional space at a venue to dedicate to networking, you should make you get the best return on your investment by making it a key feature of your event.

Invite Delegates to Network

Don't just list networking as one of the benefits of your event – invite Delegates to network and encourage them to do so. Send specific messages dedicated to highlighting the opportunities for networking; tell them about the time you've dedicated and the spaces you've allocated; provide a meeting desk to help them find people and give them a place to rendezvous.

Set up MustMeet for your event

Using MustMeet makes a feature out of networking. You can send a specific invitation to Delegates to visit MustMeet.com and link to your event. We provide template text that you can use as well as click-thru links and a dedicated landing page specific to your event. Using MustMeet shows that you're serious about networking and that you recognize the value it brings to Delegates. Many of your delegates may have already used MustMeet at other events and will already have login and profile details.

Once registered as an event organizer on MustMeet, you can click on 'Create Event' and our step-by-step guide takes you through the four steps of creating an event:

1. The basic event details – venue, location, number of delegates;
2. The Event Landing Page – Delegates arrive here from the link in your invitation to network;
3. Define the areas where your Delegates can hold their meetings;
4. The event Diary – set up times when you either encourage or block MustMeet networking.

Within 15 minutes you can add MustMeet networking to any business event.

Preparation and Planning

Successful networking is all about pre-planning and preparation – that goes for Event Organizers as well as Delegates. (We talk more about tips for face-to-face networking in our paper specifically for Delegates.) Event Organizers are responsible for providing the best environment for successful networking and giving Delegates every encouragement and opportunity to make the most of it.

Access to information

Give Delegates as much access to information about the networking opportunities as possible – times, locations, facilities, staff. It's not enough just to say 'Our event is a great place for networking' for all the reasons we've already discussed – Delegates need to be able to plan their networking in the same way they plan their time at a tradeshow or exhibition.

Delegate and Exhibitor information

Most events now list basic information about the Companies that are attending an event so that Delegates can research interesting companies before the event; many can even click thru to web-sites for further research.

As well as just Company names and websites, MustMeet provides a complete profile of both the Company and the sort of people the Delegate is hoping to meet. Together with keywords and powerful search facilities, MustMeet makes it easy for Delegates to find the right people to meet.

Send reminders

Sending reminders and information specifically about networking achieves two things in one communication: it is a more interesting prompt to Delegates about coming along to the event than just the usual reminder about their registration; and it reminds them of the value your event brings them with the opportunities to network.

Using MustMeet 'brands' your networking as something more than just an ad hoc bonus – it really shows you take their need for networking seriously.

Itineraries

If you have pre-arranged meetings then remember that Delegates will forget to bring their itineraries with them. If you have a meeting desk dedicated to networking they should have access to the Delegates' itinerary and the ability to reprint them – either individually on request or in bulk before the event depending on the number of delegates.

MustMeet offers complete Delegate management and reporting including full itinerary reprint on demand or as a report.

Reporting

If you're inviting people to network, keep track of who is responding and especially of outstanding meeting requests. Keep yourself up to date with regular summaries and reports and, if you are a professional event organizer, keep your client informed about the interest levels in networking – after all, they are paying for it in either time from their agenda or additional space at the venue.

During the Event

Venue Planning

Meeting Desk

Setting up a dedicated Meeting Desk with staff who can help Delegates meet each other is one of the most effective ways of promoting networking. If you run events regularly for the same groups of people, the Meeting Desk staff quickly get to know the Delegates and can make introductions and handle ad hoc meeting requests.

MustMeet Delegate Management lets your meeting desk staff access all details of the MustMeet system and the Delegates attending your event. You can easily reprint Delegate meeting itineraries, accept or decline meeting requests and manage diaries on behalf of your Delegates – of course, only for your events (Delegates may be attending other events for other organizers which you won't have access to).

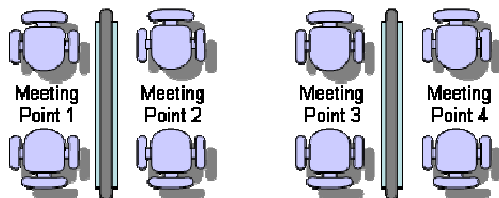
Meeting Areas or Rendezvous Point?

Your Delegates need to know exactly when and where to meet each other. It is best if you allocate dedicated meeting spaces for networking so that Delegates always know where to go. If your venue has many public areas where Delegates can sit and talk, you can simply provide a rendezvous point. The meeting desk makes an ideal rendezvous point where Delegates know they can meet up.

MustMeet gives you various ways of arranging networking at your event, including Structured Meeting Areas, Rendezvous points and Exhibition Booths. Delegates can also suggest their own place to meet which is ideal if they already know the person they are meeting with.

Meeting Areas and Meeting Points

Meeting Areas are best for more structured networking. Use a *Structured Meeting Area* where you can set aside an area with chairs (tables are optional!)



MustMeet automatically allocates individual *Meeting Points* as meeting are requested – your Delegates' itinerary tells them to meet at a specific Meeting Point (in a specific Meeting Area if you have a large event or venue with multiple Meeting Areas.)

Structured Meeting Areas can be just groups of chairs facing each other or a specially built partitioned area with tables depending on budget and space in your venue. In our experience Delegates really don't mind – it's the networking that's important!

Rendezvous Point



Use a *Rendezvous Point* where in venues where there are plenty of casual seating areas for Delegates and they just need to meet each other first. The actual Rendezvous Point can be anything from a simple sign to a staffed reception desk – numbered poles or even just numbers on a wall work really well. MustMeet automatically allocates Meeting Points as meeting are requested. For Rendezvous Points, keep the number low to avoid too many people turning up at any one time – remember, in most cases they don't know each other.

Rendezvous points are ideal where you are using a bar area or café as a networking area. Simply set up the space on MustMeet as a Rendezvous point and set the maximum number of meeting points to about half the number of tables available to leave space for ad hoc networking.

Events with Exhibition Space

At events where you have set up Booths or spaces dedicated to an exhibition, your Exhibitors staff may want to arrange meetings at their Booth. Allowing Exhibitors to pre-book meetings at their booths is real added value to their exhibitor pack. And by providing more structured networking Exhibitors can actually target specific Companies they believe may be interested in their offering.

By clicking on the 'Exhibitor' check box when setting up an event, MustMeet displays a check box to all delegates to allow Exhibitors to input their Booth Details – their Booth will be offered as a potential meeting location.

Post Event

Follow up on your networking

You (or your customer) invested time, space and effort in Networking so remind Delegates of the value they received by following up. Resend their itineraries as email and ask for feedback on the networking and the business value they received – after all these can be the best testimonials for next year's event!

MustMeet Access

Once the event is finished, MustMeet will not accept any more registrations. However it is always available to Delegates that registered for MustMeet for your event – allowing them to remind themselves of meetings they held during your event and follow up any business opportunities.

Conclusion

Delegates value networking, sometimes above the content of the event. Networking is not easy – many delegates don't really like doing it. You can really add value and make an impression on your Delegates by improving their networking experience, whether you simply make sure there is space to meet and enough free time in your agenda or offer full structured networking.

Maximise the return on this investment by making a feature of networking and encouraging Delegates to make the most of it. You will reap one of the biggest benefits that happy and satisfied Delegates bring to all of us in the event industry – they come back!

About MustMeet

MustMeet is a trading entity of 118Software Solutions Ltd. 118Software was founded in 2004 and runs networking events for large corporate clients and professional associations. MustMeet takes the experience from running these events and offers a completely self-service system designed so that any Event Organizer can simply and cost-effectively add powerful diary-based networking to their business events. MustMeet offers all the functionality you need to manage networking and make sure your delegates know who to meet, when to meet them and where they are meeting, at a fraction of the price of bespoke systems.