

# How to Make Sure ABA TECHSHOW is Not a Complete Waste of Time

By Tom Lambotte

**T**he sad truth is that most events like TECHSHOW are a complete waste of time for many of the attendees. So why do I say most of these are a waste of time? And who is to blame? It sure isn't the events—they pack an amazing amount of value, as much as they possibly can, into every nook and cranny. The problem lies with the attendees. I'm going to share three of the most common mistakes conference attendees are guilty of making which ensure their time is completely wasted.

## 1. Not wrapping up loose ends before leaving.

It's far too common to see attendees constantly stepping out to answer phone calls or replying to emails while they're sitting in on presentations. And waiting until a break to return calls, although more polite, will still rob you of valuable time since the in-between periods provide some of the most valuable opportunities at conferences.

How can you minimize this?

- One week in advance, make a list of all the activities and loose ends you need to

wrap up before leaving. Either complete these tasks or delegate them to someone on your team. This will drastically reduce the number of interruptions.

- Treat your time at TECHSHOW as if you are on vacation—unreachable unless it's a dire emergency. Teach this to your staff: "If you could not reach me, what would you do?" Most of the time, they can come up with the right answer on their own and handle many things without involving you. This will allow your mind to be present and allow you to focus.

## 2. Not having any goals set before getting there.

Most people show up to the event and, at best, have highlighted the presentations they want to attend. I don't think that's enough. You need to think about what you're looking to learn from each presentation.

Write this question down and answer it before going to TECHSHOW: "What's the single most important question that, if you got an answer to, would make your entire trip worthwhile?"

At a minimum, do this for the entire event. Get feedback from other people on your staff. What are the biggest challenges your firm is facing that, if resolved, would have the most impact?

Once you've completed this step, get more specific for an extra bonus. What would happen if you answered that question for each presentation you plan on attending? What if you answered that question before going to the Taste of TECHSHOW dinner? What if you answered that question before walking into the Exhibitor Hall? Instead of looking for the best pens and coolest freebies you can find. Instead of wandering around aimlessly, like walking through Costco without a shopping list. Do you think you would get more value out of the exhibitors if you answered this question ahead of time? Absolutely!

What about your peers or friends you want to connect with? Who is the one person you want to make sure to speak to and why? Who is the one vendor you want to meet with and why? Maybe it's a vendor you currently use or maybe it's a new solution your firm is currently missing.

Set some specific goals *before* going to TECHSHOW.

## 3. Not making friends. (Don't be a hermit.)

I believe very strongly that far more than 50 percent of the value, tips, and ideas you can gain from conferences should come from the interactions you have outside of

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the presentations. Follow-up questions with presenters, breaks between talks, going to the Taste of TECHSHOW dinners, the Welcome Reception, and the Lunch 'N Learn sessions are all opportunities set up by the ABA TECHSHOW Planning Board to facilitate interacting with your peers. If you've attended before, chances are you know some people. If it's your first or second time and you don't yet know anyone, make it a point to attend these social events. You'll meet people, make new friends, and I promise some of these connections will prove to be immensely valuable over the years as they

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often turn into lifetime relationships. One of the things I look forward to the most at ABA TECHSHOW is seeing and spending time with the many friends I have made over the years.

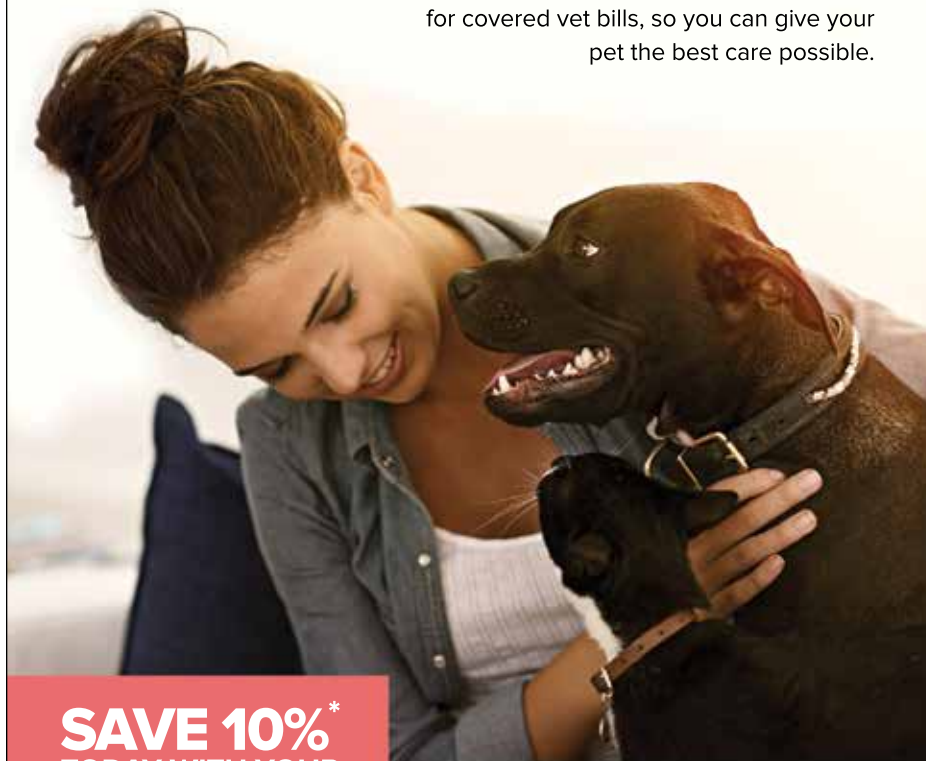
To wrap up, commit to yourself that you will squeeze every little bit of value out of ABA TECHSHOW. Go ahead and block off a few hours between now and TECHSHOW to do the things I've discussed here. I promise you will take away far more than if you repeat the three most common mistakes conference attendees are guilty of making which ensure their time is completely wasted. ■



*Tom Lambotte is CEO of GlobalMacIT, providing IT support to Mac-based law firms across the country and around the world. His methods are based on years of research, testing, and refinement of best practices. He has authored Hassle Free Mac IT Support for Law Firms and Legal Boost: Big Profits Through an IT Transformation. Order a complimentary copy of Hassle Free Mac IT Support for Law Firms at <http://www.globalmacit.com/book/>.*

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