

Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. Let's have the benefit of your comments below. We appreciate that, and also click on our social media. Thank you.

I want to talk about something really impactful that I read last fall, and it talks about trade association conventions. So, this is important, because we all go to these meetings and we kind of go hoping we'll bump into something terrific and we'll learn some stuff. But here's a really good prescription for how to go about that. So, this comes from a blog by my friend Donald Cooper in September of 2019, and he talks about being intentional before you go to a trade show or convention.

So, our big industry annual convention is coming up second week of March. It's the Associated General Contractors of America annual convention. We'll be there. My partner, Dennis, John Mayes, some other folks will be there from FBI. And I've been saving this because I want you guys to have the benefit of this thinking too. So, Donald says that he's been to obviously just hundreds of conferences over time as a speaker, and he says, "Most folks attend these events at considerable expense," that's true, "and they don't plan for what they're going to get. So, they don't plan for what they want to or need to accomplish. They mostly just wander around in the faint hope that something important and useful will accidentally leap out and stick to them."

Now, the reason I give you that quote is because it resonated with me. That's kind of the thing. I go to the trade show and I go to the display, the room where they have all the software people and equipment people and all that, and I look around kind of in the vague hope that I'll get a good blog idea, or I'll bump into an old friend or something. But what he says, I think this is a great tactic for you to use prior to any trade show convention, is sit down with your team and list four or five pressing needs that you have. What do you need to be on the lookout for at the convention? And then look at the agenda. Look at the people that are going, look at the classes that they're offering, the breakout sessions and figure out which ones are the most appealing for you.

And then he suggests, and this is a terrific idea, send an email to the people that are giving the classes or the people that you see that are going to the convention that you have a real interest in, and it's an introductory email. Be very respectful and say, "Look, I see that you're going to be at the AGC convention. Can I buy you a drink? Can I buy you some ice cream? Can we have lunch? Could I get 15 minutes of your time?" And try to schedule something with them, because people say, "Hey, are you going to the convention? I'll see you there." And you do see each other, but they're involved with somebody else, or they're in a meeting, or they're hustling off to another breakout session or something like that, and you never accomplish the vaguely intentional thing.

Schedule something. Schedule something specific for Tuesday at lunchtime or Tuesday at 3:15, or whatever it is. Make a list of the three or four questions that you have for that person or that vendor or that person with specialized knowledge that you want, and then you'll be surprised. People are so generous with their time. They'll probably give you more than 10 or 15 minutes. Most people will but be respectful of their time because these are really busy, successful people.

Then take this information, make notes, go home, and when you get home, write them a thank you note. And I don't mean an email. I mean sit down, grab a piece of your company letterhead, or a note card or something. I have FBI note cards made up, so I can just dash off a few lines in a thank you note. You'll probably get a thank you note in response to your thank you note, because they're so rare today, but write the person a thank you note afterwards and express your appreciation for the information they shared with you.

So, what do you need to focus on at the meeting? What might give you a competitive advantage? What do you and your team think will give you a competitive advantage? What products, or product groups, or types of information do you need to know more about? Where could you be more efficient in your organization? So, before you head off to the AGC convention or anywhere else, plan for it and be intentional and you'll get more out of it. Finally, this is great advice from Donald Cooper.

Finally, don't forget bootcamp, April 15th. If you haven't nominated or registered your high potential next gen people, do it now. Thank you very much. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute.