

Some Notes & Experiences on Conferences & Networking

Preparation of your conference talk:

- Tailor your talk to the specific audience

→ Think about who is sitting in the audience and which background the audience might have (maybe ask your supervisor for advice). Then already while preparing slides: Adjust your slides and in particular your introduction to the specific audience. In this way you can try to catch your audience and the probability that they will keep listening to you is much higher if you convey the impression that the contents you present are of interest to them. (Example: Start your talk from the "lowest common denominator" that connects your research to the audience interests.)
- Develop a coherent "red thread"

→ A "red thread" is very useful to guide your talk (point it out already in the introduction). It helps both you and your audience to avoid getting lost during the presentation.
- Prepare your slides carefully

→ Don't give too many details that confuse or overwhelm the audience. Try to be abstract but precise and think carefully about which information is really necessary to understand your main messages and follow your talk. Don't overload your slides and use colors to highlight important contents. Frame titles (and a red thread) are helpful to guide the audience.
- Practice with your colleagues and ask them for feedback

→ After preparing slides: Practice your talk (not only on your one). Ask colleagues to listen to your talk and to give feedback. Subsequently, improve and adjust your slides. (While practicing you can also check if your red thread is strong enough.)

Networking:

- First contacts: Profit from your colleagues contacts

→ Most easy if you travel for the first time and if you travel with colleagues: Ask them to introduce you to other researchers they already know (it will automatically happen) and profit from your colleagues already existing contacts.
- Prepare an "elevator pitch"

→ Prepare a few strong and crunchy sentences that explain your research in a powerful way. It will be very helpful for scientific small talk with other researchers. (Advantage: You can already prepare your elevator pitch prior to the conference.)

- Don't be shy and start conversations with other researchers

→ Examples: If you want to get in contact with one of the speakers: Use coffee breaks to thank him/her for his/her great talk. Consequently, a conversation will typically arise, where you will probably have the opportunity to introduce yourself. (Maybe you also have a question regarding his/her talk to prevent uncomfortable silence?) If the researcher you are interested to get in contact with is not presenting: Use a question about his/her research as a starting point for a conversation. (This can either be a specific question that you might have about his/her latest paper or a more general question about new research directions/ employees of his/her working group that you already got in contact with/ whatever seems suitable in the specific case.)

- Take the opportunity of giving a talk, presenting a poster, etc

→ With a presentation you can "turn the tables" and get some networking and contacts "for free" since other researchers will get interested in you/ want to ask a specific question about your research/ etc.

- Take part in network activities and conference dinners

→ You will get in contact with other researchers in a more relaxed atmosphere.

- Write mails to give your contacts emphasis

→ It is an effective strategy since people will more likely remember you at a later point in time. (Example: If you once will have a specific request, you can refer to that mail and it is more likely that your contact will remember you and will answer your request.)