

Experts agree that the top benefit of attending an exhibition and/or a conference is the chance to network as you will rarely find so many industry contacts in one location. The networking opportunities at these events enable you and your company to find out information and learn from fellow industry professionals who may be aware of developments and initiatives relevant to your company.

KEY APPROACH

When proposing an exhibition or conference for approval, be sure to focus on what you will bring back to the organisation as return for the investment. You need to clearly articulate the connection between your organisation's knowledge requirements and the exhibition/conference programme. Include the following:

- **Session content:** Identify how the sessions are relevant to your company:
 - Tools
 - Technologies
 - Processes
 - Products
- **Suppliers:** Will the exhibition or conference showcase products by suppliers you currently work with or are looking to collaborate with in the future? The event may provide the opportunity to compare competing products and services which your company is interested in.
- **Training:** Outline seminars or workshops which will provide information and skills relevant to your company and job role.

GENERAL ADVICE

Many travel and training budgets have been minimized, and some organisations are experiencing severe financial restraints which means that regardless of the merits of an exhibition or conference, you will need to justify the expense requested. Here are some things you may want to consider as you begin to work with your supervisor to get approval to attend:

- Focus on what you will specifically bring back to the organisation as return for the investment.
- Offer to prepare and deliver a short presentation and Q&A to your colleagues to share what you learnt. That way your co-workers will benefit from your attendance too.
- Share the conference materials with your colleagues.
- Create a plan that shows who will cover for you while you are attending the exhibition.

BENEFITS WORKSHEET

The following worksheet will help you outline the benefits of attending the exhibition and conference. Include and exclude features that you feel are important to your company and complete the benefits that will be valuable to your company if you attend. The first two benefits are examples:

Features of the Exhibition/Conference	Benefits to attendees
Networking Benefits	This event will allow [specific team members] to network with other professionals and vendors in the industry. We will be able to develop our knowledge of: tools, technologies and processes and discover ideas we weren't previously aware of.
Teambuilding (if sending a big part of your group)	This event will help build our team, providing a forum for team members to discuss best practices and how we might apply them in our company to improve our information products, workflow and processes.
Current Tools	XXX
Future Tools Exploration	XXX
Current Technologies	XXX
Future Technologies Exploration	XXX
Current Processes	XXX
Future Processes Exploration	XXX
Vendors with Tools & Technologies You Are Exploring	XXX