



# PHOTO STYLISTS

*Guide to*

**NETWORKING AT  
CONFERENCES,  
TRADESHOWS  
& EVENTS**

BONNIE AUNCHMAN.COM

# HELLO!

Thank you for requesting our Photo Stylist's Guide to Networking at Conferences, Trade Shows & Events.

I have gone to countless seminars, workshops, trade shows, meet-up's, you name it, I've been to them! Really, when I look back, it was the beginning and cornerstone to achieving industry and business knowledge and getting clients. So, I really want to encourage you to attend conferences, trade shows, events, and workshops - and not just pertaining to the Styling Industry. While we get a lot of our inspiration (and business) via websites and online, it is great to get out and meet people "IRL" ;), right?

I have developed this Guide from my trade show and event experiences to guide you as you navigate through attending these events as a means to gain knowledge, get inspired, get clients, and meet collaborators!

Before reading this Guide, you can check out our Resource Library for [The Photo Stylist's Guide to the Best Conferences, Trade Shows and Events to Attend](#). This Guide is a companion to that Guide. So, chose your events and get out there and meet people in your Industry, business and those complimentary to your Industry. In this Guide, we give you 13 Tips covering the following:

- \* **Best Practices for Networking at Events**
- \* **Checklist of What to Bring to Events**
- \* **Mapping Out Your Plan**
- \* **Follow-up**

We want to help you navigate this industry, share our knowledge and help you build a successful styling and creative career. On our site (& Instagram) we share styling tips, trends, and [Free Guides](#) as well as offer a [Business of Photo Styling](#) Course and Shop.

Contact us if you have any questions, we would love to hear from you!

*Bonnie*

# 1. BEFORE INVESTING IN EVENT, ASK YOURSELF . . .

- \* What are you hoping to gain, learn and take away from attending?
- \* Do you **need** to go for your business or do you just **want** to go?
- \* Can you really afford to go?

**With all that being said - it's important to invest in yourself and your business.** Remember, some events and trade shows do not cost money to attend, it may just be travel or food expenses - but those costs can add up. Again, you should invest in your career, just make sure you can and that you have thought of all your priorities and business expenses first. For example, if you don't have a website showcasing your work, this maybe something you should invest in first, before investing in a costly event. When you give businesses your card - they will look at your site, make sure you/your website is ready.

## 2. RESEARCH CONFERENCE & EXHIBITORS

It may seem obvious, but research and learn as much as you can about event before you register. Also, read reviews, if they are available, so you know what to expect. (Do a google review search. Many Bloggers post reviews of events.) Some questions to think about:

1. What is the main focus of conference/trade show?
2. Cost of event. Is there early bird or a reduced fee?
3. What exhibitors/vendors will be there?
4. Are there workshops or panel discussions that interest you? Is there additional fee to attend?
5. Will all programming be in one building or multiple sites (So you can have travel/parking plan)
6. Would you be eligible for Stylist/Media/Creative credentials?

## 3. MAP OUT A PLAN BEFORE EVENT

There are several types of events you can attend that would benefit your styling/creative career. In this Guide, we talk about two different types of events: (1) Events/Conferences/Workshops/Summits and (2) Trade Shows

**Events & Conferences.** Education on the Styling Industry and Business.

**Trade Show Format.** Meet people/companies who have a product you can use when you are styling or you can style for.

(For example: Linen Company, Tabletop Company or Wardrobe) Trade show formats allow you to see a wide variety products, receive wholesale price catalogs, meet company owners/ reps to possible trade services or have their products/items sent to you to use. (Also, many trade shows offer education, workshops and panel discussions.)

**Remember, you can meet people to work/collaborate with at either type of event.**

If going to a trade show, see what companies and potential clients you would like to meet by researching on the trade show website to see who is attending/exhibiting. Seeing new products is a great way to stay on top of industry trends, but also great to meet the owners/ reps of the company to call upon when you have occasion to use their products in your photo shoots. Oftentimes, you can borrow items (often called "studio services") for a shoot and return to them. This is where going to a trade show and meeting people is a great advantage - after all it's about relationships. Most trade shows will have an exhibitor listing on their website to let you know who is exhibiting and their booth number so you can easily find them as well as who will be attending the trade show.

## 4. WHEN MAPPING OUT YOUR PLAN, CHECK THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Who do you definitely want to meet?** In terms of either styling for their brand or using their products for styling shoots/projects. **(We have included a Tracking Form in this Guide or if you prefer to keep track electronically, many of the bigger trade shows have Apps)**
2. **Attendees.** Get to know who else will be attending the trade show, conference, workshop or event. Use social media and ask who will be going. Some conferences and workshops create a Facebook Group where the other attendees can introduce themselves. Read introductions and get to know the people who will also be attending. This will give you a head start to making some meaningful connections before you go to event. This is great especially if you feel uneasy about going solo to event. You can make plans to meet at event. (I have done this many, many times at trade shows. I post on social media that I am going, asking "who is going too?" to possible attendees. Oftentimes, we schedule a "coffee meeting" at the trade show to meet) Or look to see who is going on their event website and connect with them directly.

3. **Speakers.** Who are the speakers? What will they speaking about? Think of specific questions you would like to ask them? If they wrote a book and you are interested in the topic - read their book. Research, prepare before and when you are there - sit in the front row! :)
4. **Where are the Exhibitors /Companies from?** Who is there from the area you routinely work in. (For me, it is Massachusetts, New England, Connecticut and New York. (I do travel for assignments, but I base my work out of the New England area. So, I look to see who is at the trade show from the areas I most often work in.)

**Be extremely mindful that companies exhibiting at trade shows are there to get clients - they are in selling and presenting mode and are there to meet prospective clients for their business.** Don't try to have a meeting with them at the trade show (or talk too long to them) when they are trying to do business. If you see a prospective client arrive and want to talk to them, excuse yourself and tell them you will contact them later. If they are talking with prospective clients/or clients, don't interrupt, just come back to them later. Below is exactly what I say when I go to a trade show booth that I am interested in either styling for their company or I'm interested in using their products for a photo shoot:

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*“Hi, I’m Bonnie. Is the owner of your company or Representative here I can talk to?” Upon talking to the right person who would handle working with a stylist, I say “ I know you are really busy and meeting clients and buyers, I do not want to take you away from that - I just wanted to give you my card and would love to contact you in a couple weeks after you have get home and settled in after the show to talk to you about styling for your brand or using your products in some upcoming shoots I have”. (genuinely compliment them on their product/brand.) Ideally, you have researched companies you have genuine interest in - this lets them know you approaching them is not just “random”.*

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Also, this should be a given but, be interested in (& show interest in) their product! Don't just go to any and all exhibitors - really have an interest in either styling for them or using their product in your photo shoots, don't just “collect” business cards from businesses you really are not interested in. Do your research to see who is going to the show you really want to meet. (Each trade show I go to, I have about 5-8 companies that I definitely want to work with. I get to know all about their product, owner and company before I attend event and speak with them. I literally tell them with truth and honesty - “I came to show to meet you and see your products.”

## 5. INVEST IN GOOD WEBSITE & BUSINESS CARDS

If you are just starting out, don't worry that you have to have a great, fancy website with a lot of photos. However, do focus on having a nice, clean, organized website as well as good business cards. Ensure that everything you do - website, business cards and social media accounts - are clean and brand cohesive. (Because if you are a freelance stylist or a studio staff stylist - you are a brand) People you do give your cards to will (most likely) go to your site. Be proud of your website - do not make apologies that it is not good, doesn't have a lot of photos, etc. It tends to be the nature of us stylists . . . our sites are always a "work in process". Be positive when talking about your website. Don't worry about not having a large website: Three things to concentrate on to start: (1) One page of your beautifully styled photos (2) About Page and (3) Contact Page. In time you will build a bigger site.

## 6. WHAT TO BRING & WHAT TO WEAR

1. Lightweight Large Tote Bag to carry Catalogs, Brochures, Business Cards
2. Bottle of Water/Snack/Mints
3. Business Cards/Small Portfolio Work Cards\*
4. Camera/Phone Camera (Always ask before you take photos/post photos at trade show)
5. Notebook/Tablet to take notes (I use Evernote) or voice recorder notes on your phone.
6. Post It to write our conversation/place on their catalog/card as a reminder of our conversation
7. Phone/Laptop/Tablet Charger
8. Wear Professional Clothing (Stylish, Business Casual) & Comfortable Footwear

(\*You may not use/need your business cards. Many times when you meet others at events, people ask what is your IG, or FB and connect that way - but just in case, you should have business cards with you. Be prepared. Also, when attending trade shows and meeting exhibitors, they may scan your bar code on your Badge to get your information. However, do remember to get their business card or catalog if they prefer to scan your Badge so you also have their contact information.

## 7. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

I'm not a huge fan of "practicing your elevator pitch". I do think you when you are talking/introducing yourself to a prospective client, you should just be clear and concise about who you are, what you offer, your aesthetic/niche and why you are the best at what you do! ;) Just be natural about it - have a conversation - not a "canned, rehearsed speech".

## 8. ATTEND SOCIAL EVENTS PLANNED

Be social. Sign up for meet-and-greet sessions, special workshops, book signings and tours. Oftentimes, I go to conferences and events by myself. While I love going to trade shows, workshops, and events - I'm still in "work mode" so I tend to go myself. But, on occasion I have gone with colleagues and that is fun too. So, don't be concerned if you are going "solo" to social events, other people are too. Remember, it's about relationships - be social. You already have a common interest by just going and being a part of the conference together. Remember why you are there - to meet people.

## 9. BE HELPFUL & VALUABLE. LISTEN TO OTHERS.

While we call it "networking" and it seems that we are asking something from others and going to events with the intent of gaining new clients, be mindful that it's important to be a good giver and a good listener. Share your insight, tips, and techniques with others that need them. If you know of someone that could help someone else - share that contact and help them - be a connector. Don't go to events with the feeling of wanting/needing something. Don't be so concentrated on what you are going to say. . . or what you need . . . that you lose site of listening to your new prospective clients, suppliers, colleagues or friends. Be thoughtful and collaborative.

## 10. REGISTRATION CATEGORY

When you register on site at a trade show, it usually will be color coded (either by the lanyard they give you, by your badge or by what you are at the show to do. (For example: Buyer, Media, Stylist.) If you are a writer for a Blog, or have your own Style Blog, you can register as "Media".

## 11. BE BRAVE

I know it can be scary, going up to people and companies you don't know, introducing yourself and telling them you want to work/style with/for them, or asking them if you can use their products for a photo shoot, but I promise in time it will not be. You will come to learn that they are looking for people who do what you do - style photos. You will come to learn that it is a relationship that it mutually beneficial and collaborative and one that many companies welcome. Be brave.

## 12. AFTER THE EVENT

1. Re-connect with everyone you met. (attendees, exhibitors, speakers, businesses, sponsors.)
2. If event was small, connect with the organizer of the conference/event with a thank you note and tell them what you learned and what you valued about their event.
3. After the trade show, within a couple of weeks, remember to send that brief, to-the-point email. Also, if you send your follow up emails and don't get an answer - just keep trying. Below is an example:

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*“Thanks for speaking with me at the show . . . or if they give you a contact name send an email similar : I talked to \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_ Trade Show a couple weeks ago about the potential of styling for your brand (or using your product for upcoming shoots) and he/she referred me to you . . . would love to talk to you about the possibility this week . . .*

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## 13. BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE EVENT . . .

1. If possible, complete tasks that you have before you go, so you leave with a clear mind.
2. Communicate to your clients you are planning on being “out of the studio” with dates.
3. Have friendly email auto responder on for those who contact you. (but do contact/answer those clients while at the show or event. It is best to have a reputation for quick response times to your clients)



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[@bonnieaunchman](#)

*Bonnie*  
AUNCHMAN