

MAXIMIZING YOUR CONFERENCE INVESTMENT

Have you ever left a conference feeling inspired and motivated, eager to implement all your new insights; but then once you are back to your regular day to day responsibilities and demands, all the things you wanted to do at the conference just end up last on your never-ending to do list? Or perhaps you're so overwhelmed with all that you learned, you are frozen in in-action and don't know where to start?

SOLUTION

If this sounds like you, I have a practice that will help!

As soon as you register for a conference, schedule one hour on your calendar within 2 weeks of the conference to reflect on the content and commit to action.

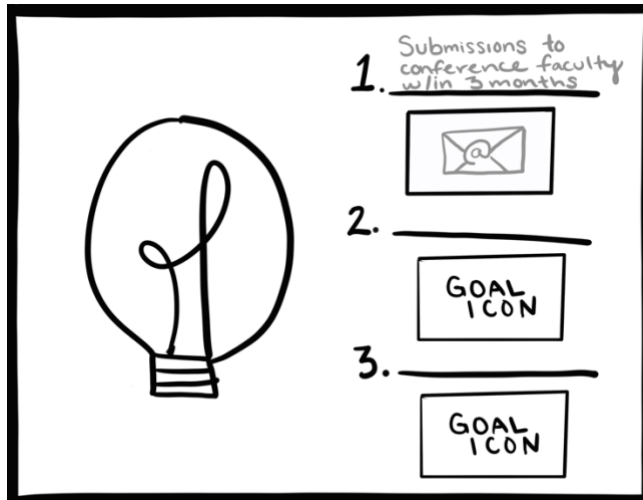
During this time block, draw through the exercises below to create a plan of action for your key conference takeaways. These activities transform the conference content into a personal guide with an aim to:

- Select 3 key takeaways/goals from the conference
- Identify what is needed for these goals to be integrated into your life
- Determine an action plan for implementation
- Create visuals to use as motivation

Before you get started, gather the following supplies:

- 7 pieces of paper (to be used in landscape)
- Black or blue pen/marker
- 3 to 4 Coloring Utensils (or more if you feel like it)
- The notes you took during the conference
- This article!

EXERCISE 1: TOP 3 GOALS



- On the left-side of your paper, draw a light bulb.
- On the right-side of your paper space out numbers 1 to 3.
- For each number, write out a mini goal you have based on things you learned at the conference.
 - Try not to over think. Hopefully 3 things will pop into your head.
 - If not, take some time to review your notes and see if there was anything you added lots of exclamations to or circled or underlined.
 - These goals should be as specific as possible and be within your control.

Limit your list to only 3 items. A contributing factor to why goals are not reached is because we have too many. Start with the 3 most important ones. You can always go back and review your notes and do this exercise again AFTER you reach your initial goals.

Pause now to **write them down**. This is the first step to committing to your goals.

Now, wherever you have room near each goal, **draw an icon**.

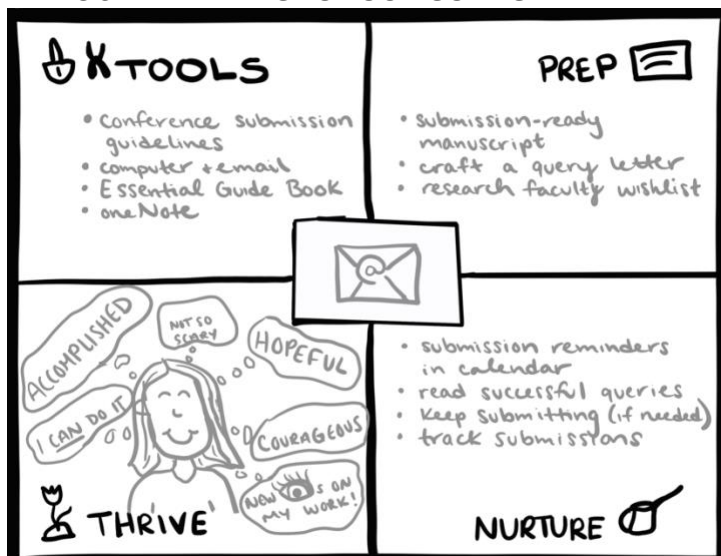
This doesn't have to be a complicated piece of art. In fact, it should be as simple as possible. Something you visualize when thinking about this goal.

For example, I have an icon of an email symbol for my goal of submitting to conference faculty within the next 3 months.

Excellent! Now you have a clear picture of **WHAT** you want to accomplish. Exercise 2 will help us determine **HOW** and **WHY** (and potentially **WHO** will help). Exercise 3 will help plan **WHEN** you'll take the necessary steps.

You can either do exercise 2 for all 3 goals and then move to exercise 3 for all three goals, or you can do exercise 2 and 3 for one goal, then repeat for the remaining 2 goals.

EXERCISE 2: TENDING TO YOUR GOAL GARDEN



On the next sheet of paper, draw a rectangle in the middle of the paper. In this rectangle, draw one of the goal icons from the first exercise to have as your focus for this exercise. You will repeat this exercise with a new sheet of paper for each goal.

Now section out your paper into quadrants.

In the top left corner label this area **TOOLS**. If you feel so inclined, draw tools too.

Spend a moment thinking through all the tools needed to achieve this goal, and list them in this box. Will your goal require any new art materials? Or continued education costs of a program? Is there help you'll need from anyone else?

With my example of submitting to conference faculty in the next 3 months I would write:

- Specific conference submission guidelines
- Computer and email
- The Essential Guide Book
- OneNote

Moving to the top right area, write the label **PREP**.

Take a moment to think through what you need to get done before you can accomplish your goal.

Continuing with my example:

- Have a submission-ready manuscript
- Craft a query letter (using the guides in the Essential Guide Book)
- Research the agents and editors Wishlists

Next, continue clockwise to the **bottom right box**. This area will be labeled **NURTURE**. What may require continued action? Think of a garden...you'll need to weed, water, and prune. How

can you stay motivated to make progress on your goal? What problems can you anticipate, and how can you mitigate those problems?

To NURTURE my goal, I would list:

- Add submission reminders to my calendar
- Continue reading and researching other successful queries
- Keep submitting beyond conference agents and editors (if needed)
- Track submissions

For the final quadrant on the bottom left we are capturing our WHY with the label of THRIVE. What does this goal look like once you have successfully implemented it? What feelings are you experiencing? What specifically is happening in your life now because of it? Here is an opportunity to draw it out or practice your writing craft by envisioning how everything works! This box represents you as the hero in your story when you have overcome all the problems.

Again using my example, I would write out words on how I would feel after submitting:

- Accomplished
- Hopeful
- Courageous
- Got my work in front of new eyes
- Realize it's not so scary
- I can do it!

EXERCISE 3: ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME

THIS QUARTER
1-2 SMALL STEPS
> CHECK IN + CONTINUED PLAN

THIS MONTH
1-2 SMALL STEPS

THIS WEEK
1-2 SMALL STEPS

GOAL ICON

MONTH # . . .

On a new sheet of paper, on the bottom left corner start by **drawing a goal icon**.

Draw 3 boxes, growing in size, from the bottom left-hand corner, resembling a ripple effect.

Label the boxes from in going out: **THIS WEEK, THIS MONTH, THIS QUARTER**

Now jot down 1 to 2 small steps you can and will take for your goal within these time frames.

Focus on keeping the steps do-able, and easily accomplished within 5 to 20 minutes.

When you get to the space, **THIS QUARTER**, include an additional step: check in on goal progress and decide what continued action steps are needed.

Once you write out your small steps in each area, open outlook on your computer, or reminders on your phone, or grab your planner (whatever scheduling system you use) and plug these small steps into your calendar!

Do exercises 2 and 3 for all three of your conference goals from exercise 1 and you're done!

What a great use of one hour. Now you know what to do from the conference items and you have broken it down into manageable pieces.

FINAL WORDS

Keep all these sheets in a convenient place to review. Another reason goals aren't met is because they don't remain top of mind. Using these exercises as a visual reminder can help motivate you to keep going with your plan. They can also aide as a check-in guide to gauge the progress you're making and signify if you need to make any adjustments.

Happy Achieving!