

# “Know Before You Go”

Tips and Advice for Having the Best Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference Experience

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When the calendar flips to July, the Microsoft partner community really gets into the zone with plans for maximizing time at the Worldwide Partner Conference. The IAMCP WIT team held a “Know Before You Go” webinar recently featuring Julie Simpson, Gail Mercer-McKay, Nicola Hannay, Melissa Porter, and Sharan Hildebrand. They shared some great advice to help attendees get the most from the event. Here are my favourite takeaways from what was a very engaging session:

**1. Networking** – It’s the number one reason to attend WPC and with over 15,000 people in attendance, it’s important to come prepared:

- **Get clear on your value proposition.** What do you do and why are you attending WPC? Be as specific and direct as you can. It makes it easier to find the right people to talk to and get your message across.
- **Business cards.** Have a stack with you at all times. When you get a card from someone, make a note on the back of the card of what you talked about so you remember what to do when it is time to follow up.
- **The “Tell, Ask, Learn” model.** Once you determine who you want to meet use this model to make the most of the connection: **Tell** him or her why you are interested in meeting, **Ask** to set up a meeting and then offer-up what you are really good at and what the other person can **Learn** from you.
- **Introductions.** Connect the contacts you’ve made to other people with a common interest. Be helpful and people will be helpful in return.
- **Connect 365** is a must use tool to find people, business interests, and other information topics that will help you not just at WPC but for the rest of the year.
- **Be social, be present.** Many connections are made onsite at the conference. Get out to the events and activities and get involved.



**2. Scheduling** – There is so much going on that a game plan is needed to fit it all in:

- Start your schedule with the vision keynotes to make sure you don’t miss messages from the top executives.
- Add in the main networking events so you build connections and uncover opportunities. Don’t forget the fabulous [IAMCP WIT](#) events!
- Think about what you want from WPC and identify your personal must-attend sessions using the [WPC Session Planner](#). The sessions feature incredible speakers and sessions are the place to take advantage of training and development.
- More good news—if you are conflicted because you want to attend two sessions at the same time, you can access the recording from Connect 365 afterwards.



- Make time for the Regional activities. Visit the Regional lounges and meet up with others from the same geography.
- Leave 15-20 minutes between activities. The conference center is huge and meetings can run long so make sure to allot time for travel between locations.

**3. First Time Attendees Program** – Microsoft realized that first time attendees (FTA’s - of course there’s a three letter acronym!) could use a little extra support as they navigate WPC. Here’s what to look for:

- If not already done, FTA’s can mark their registration to indicate their first-time status and be assigned a mentor who will help with advance preparation and offer onsite advice.
- A WPC orientation session is scheduled on Sunday afternoon from 4-5 p.m. in room S210.
- FTA lunch tables are marked with signage and offer an opportunity to connect with mentors and meet other FTA’s.
- Look for the red lanyards to find onsite mentors during the conference.

**4. Dress code** – The fashionable IAMCP WIT ladies covered this off with style:

- **Start with feet.** Bring comfortable shoes!!! Buy new ones now so you can break them in before walking the long hallways of the convention center and making the mad dash for shuttles.
- **Dress in layers.** You may not have time to go from meetings to the hotel to change before evening events so dress with flexibility in mind. It’s Orlando in July. Consider the heat outside along with the frosty air conditioning inside the conference center.
- **You are fabulous so feel free to look fabulous.** Dress appropriately for a conference but it isn’t strict buttoned-up business attire at all times. The evenings are business casual to business dressy. Bring those lovely summer dresses ladies!



**5. WPC Follow Up** – It’s a whirlwind of activity during the conference. Just as important as the time in Orlando is what you do when you arrive home.

- Take 30 minutes at the end of each day of the conference to write a summary of the activities, points, contacts, and ideas. It will make it much easier to sort through actions back at the office.
- It’s an investment and privilege to attend WPC. Consider creating a “Bringing WPC to You” session for your peers, partners, and customers to share what you learned.

**6. Miscellaneous good stuff** – Defying a specific category, the session offered other useful tips including:

- **Hydrate.** You’ll be constantly on the go and the Orlando sun will zap your energy if you aren’t careful. No one has time for that. Drinking water is easy to access at the conference center - fill ‘er up!
- **Transportation.** Shuttles from the hotels are provided but make sure to check distance to convention center and plan accordingly. It’s not easy to move 15,000 people around

the city during rush hour traffic. Allow lots of time and avoid stress by getting to the convention center early. Check specific evening activities to find out transportation arrangements.

- **Take time for yourself.** Whether your preference is meditation, calling home to talk to the kids, a game of Candy Crush, or simple stretching, make sure to take a few minutes out to recharge so you can maintain the pace.
- **Always on.** The parties and social gatherings with alcohol in the evenings can feel like the time to let loose. While it is time for fun, keep in mind that these gatherings are still professional events and manage accordingly.



**Most of all – connect, learn, and enjoy your time in Orlando!**