5 Tips for Effective Virtual Networking

While networking is challenging under “normal” circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything, including the dynamics of networking at a virtual conference. Here is practical guidance for how to network at a virtual conference and make connections.

1. Set up your virtual space to stay engaged and focus on the sessions.
   - Organize your space
   - Reduce/remove distractions
   - Silence your phone
   - Ask your household not to disturb you

2. Plan and prepare before attending the conference.
   - Decide which professionals you want to connect with
   - Research their backgrounds before the conference
   - Come up with a few questions to start the conversation
   - Create a 2-3 sentence spiel to introduce yourself virtually
   - Update your profile on the conference platform and make sure it includes your headshot and social media profiles (see tip #3)

3. Use the conference platform to your advantage.
   - If possible, test access to the conference platform the day before the event begins
   - Familiarize yourself with the schedule and how to access all features of the platform
   - Attend networking opportunities and informal coffee chats
   - Actively participate in chat rooms during the sessions and follow up with the people who commented on topics of interest to you

4. Take the networking off the platform.
   - Get the contact information of those you are networking with
   - Directly connect with conference attendees over social media
   - Change up the pace and reach out over the phone. Some things are easier said than written
   - Send an email to someone outside of the virtual conference to make the personal connection
   - Follow up shortly after the conference to keep it timely

Learn More
Check out AcademyHealth’s blog for more tips on operating in a virtual environment:
- How to Create Meaningful Connections at the 2020 Virtual Annual Research Meeting
- Four Tips to Increase Audience Engagement When Presenting Virtually

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