



7 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A CONFERENCE

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF ANY HIGH-LEVEL GATHERING TAKES PRACTICE AND A BIT OF LUCK. DOMINIQUE TURPIN SHARES HIS INSIGHTS INSPIRED BY THIS YEAR'S TRIP TO DAVOS.

By IMD President Dominique Turpin – March 2015

IMD
Chemin de Bellerive 23
PO Box 915,
CH-1001 Lausanne
Switzerland

Tel: +41 21 618 01 11
Fax: +41 21 618 07 07
info@imd.org
www.imd.org

It is easy to be dazzled by high-level events. Even for seasoned conference-goers like me, this year's annual World Economic Forum gathering of global leaders in Davos was terrific.

It is hard to get the most out of events like these, because there are simply too many interesting people to meet and too many ideas to hear. So, having reread all the notes I took at the event, I would offer the following 7 tips for Davos and any other big high-level event:

1] Prepare to make tough choices. You're not in your executive office at Davos, but you still need to make some difficult calls—especially between all the star names speaking at the same time. Do I go to see Angela Merkel talking about Germany, the eurozone and Greece? Or should I listen to what Alibaba's Jack Ma is saying about the internet in China? You can't do both.

2] Have 10-minute meetings. You'll talk with some people for longer, of course, but even very short meetings are great for reconnecting and asking how business is going. If you don't have these 10-minute chats, you'll be out of people's sight and possibly out of their minds too. For me, being in Davos this year was like being in Japan, because I met IMD's top 10 Japanese clients inside three days. Fantastic, and a great time-saver too!

3] Don't overschedule yourself. Leave time for chance encounters—[like the instructive one I had with Bill Gates in Japan more than 30 years ago](#). By not signing up for everything at Davos, I was able to accept an on-the-spot invitation from Japan's education minister to discuss how Japan can develop globally minded leaders. I also had unexpected and interesting encounters with an Indian executive from the fast-moving consumer goods industry, and with a South Korean manager who was looking for marketing advice.

4] Stay awake on the bus. Each day I went to and from the main conference center in a small six-person bus, and I had some fascinating fellow passengers. One of the world's leading oncologists, for example. A French scientist from Stanford University who is a global expert on the ageing of the brain. And a former astronaut who is now a member of the U.S. government. If you snooze or stare at your phone during the ride, you'll miss your chance to get an executive summary of their presentations!

5] Take the time to think. Davos and other high-level gatherings are gifts. Why? Because they are rare opportunities to spend a few days thinking about where the world is going and how your own organization can take advantage of these trends. You can't disconnect from your job entirely at these events, of course, but you really should take time to reflect while you can.

6] Step out of your comfort zone. Don't just stick to who and what you know. Mix things up a little and strike a balance between your everyday role and new ideas. I had an excellent conversation at Davos with the chairman of one of the world's largest banks, and swapped stories with the heads of other leading business schools. But I also listened to what people were saying about climate, health, diversity and religion.

7] Thank the organizers. If you like an event as much as I liked Davos, take the time to write a thank you note. Organizing big events is not easy. But from the opening concert with Andrea Bocelli to the closing party, the logistics at Davos were outstanding. It was a privilege to be there, and Klaus Schwab and his team deserve huge thanks for that.

Getting the most out of any high-level gathering takes practice and a bit of luck. But these 7 tips worked for me at Davos, and they'll be useful at other big events too.

[Dominique Turpin](#) is the Nestlé Professor and President of IMD. He co-directs IMD's [Orchestrating Winning Performance](#) program, the next edition of which takes place in Lausanne on 21-26 June 2015.

Related Programs



ORCHESTRATING WINNING PERFORMANCE - <http://www.imd.org/owp>

The global business program for individuals and teams

Program Directors Michael Wade and Dominique Turpin

- Get exposed to the latest management thinking and to practical and innovative solutions for your business
- Anticipate global business trends
- Boost your performance, broaden your perspectives and expand your global network
- Design the program that suits you and your team
- Become a complete executive through activities that develop your mental, physical, and emotional health