

## Don't Miss the ICD Conference in September 2016

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As I write this for The Chronical, I realize it's almost time for the ICD Annual Conference which will be held in Portland, Oregon, from September 22-24, 2016. It will be the ninth conference I have attended in the last ten years and it is likely to be just as rewarding and exciting in 2016 as it was the first time I attended in 2007. My purpose in letting everyone know why this conference is not to be missed is not only to help ICD market the event, but more importantly, to let subscribers know about the benefits of attending. Most organizers and productivity consultants working in the professional organizing business have attended at least one NAPO conference. They are huge, with hundreds of professional organizers in attendance. There is intimacy at ICD conferences, which is great, especially for a first time attendee. Additionally, sessions are plenary (there is only one session in a time slot so attendees do not have to miss a thing).

Having my own business for over sixteen years, I firmly believe that staying up on ICD's advances and educational offerings by way of attending conferences gives me a step up in the profession. My clients are impressed when I tell them I am taking a few days away from hands on work with them to 'up my game'. Attendees can obtain credit toward certificates of study by attending the sessions and certifications by taking in person exams at the ICD Conference. Additionally, to see, hear, and experience experts in person, in my opinion, is an excellent way to learn. Where else could we meet Dr. Russell Ramsey, Dr. David Tolin and Barry Yourgrau (author of "Mess"), among others, in person? I have often had the opportunity to share breakfast, lunch, dinner, and/or a cocktail with high level presenters.

The networking at the conference is fantastic. Through other colleagues nationwide (some whom I see annually), I have received numerous client referrals. Additionally, bouncing work-related challenges off someone face to face is, in many cases, more productive than doing so by email or telephone. For those who haven't taken the step to sign up for the conference, reach out to a seasoned organizer who is an ICD subscriber and ask the questions you need answered before you make this important time and financial commitment. If you don't know a subscriber, call the ICD headquarters and Jim or Kelly will be more than happy to assist!

Now, assuming that I have encouraged you to sign up, you will have an opportunity to get together at a 'meet-up' in the conference hotel prior to the general session. There you will also meet other 'newbies', as well as seasoned professionals. Attending any professional conference for the first time can be daunting to even the most gregarious of us, so I offered to be the buddy/conference mentor coordinator for the conferences in 2013 and 2014. Getting in touch with your buddy/conference mentee prior to the conference by email and/or telephone is important.

Usually conference mentors/buddies make the initial outreach to their conference mentee. The conference mentor can provide answers to questions that newbies no doubt will have. Speaking or emailing with the conference mentor/buddy relieves some of the stress newbies might be feeling about how to dress, what to bring, not to mention, what to expect. By having this introduction to a buddy (conference mentor), a first time attendee will have less trepidation walking into that Friday morning breakfast or the first session. Just having someone to sit beside often allows a first timer to breathe a sigh of relief. After the buddy meet-up, the first conference event you will attend (which I encourage you not to miss) is the general session/annual meeting, followed by a cocktail reception. Here you will be introduced to the board of directors who will outline the future of ICD. The next two days are spent with educational sessions including breaks and lunches in between. There is an awards and recognition banquet on Friday night, and it is always impressive to see which colleagues have completed the various levels of certification. I love cheering for them and their fine accomplishments.

On a separate note, attending the ICD Conferences has allowed me to visit cities I had never visited. Denver in 2013 was a personal highlight. Several colleagues and I flew in a day early and took an excursion to Pike's Peak. Many attendees use free time to experience shopping and dining opportunities or visit nearby family members. Finally, regardless of whether one works with the chronically disorganized, it is recommended that a professional organizer attend at least one ICD Conference during his/her career. As a new professional organizer in 2000, I had no knowledge of hoarding or ADHD. It was only as the years progressed and I worked with these unique clients that I was initially introduced to NAPO and then eventually to ICD. I realized that educating myself through ICD would be crucial to my success and that of my clients. If you are considering attending the ICD Conference in September, I highly encourage you to do so. I have never heard of anyone who was disappointed with their experience!

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