



Confidence to Conference

advocating on our own behalf to attend the Conference on Landscape Architecture

"I hope I can share a few tips to help this seemingly distant conference become a reality by empowering you to have a conversation with your boss about the value... they would gain by sending you." - Tyler Richburg, PLA

Background:

The Conference on Landscape Architecture is the greatest concentration of like-minded professionals in the country. Although you may have gone while you were a student, it may not be on your radar as a recent graduate or emerging professional. This is likely due to how cost prohibitive it is to attend. That said, if you leverage your opportunities correctly, you could be on your way to the next conference!

Tip #1 – Research

Make it evident that you've done your homework. Highlight the sessions, speakers, and topics that you are most interested in. Then draw a clear line as to how they will shape you as a professional and exactly how you plan to share the information you bring back (e.g. lunch presentation, written report, etc)

Tip #2 – Timing

Consider raising the topic of attending the conference during salary/bonus discussions. This is an excellent time to discuss the subject because your supervisor will likely already have both your compensation and professional development in mind.

Tip #3 – Volunteer

At times some employers see the Conference on Landscape Architecture as a glorified vacation. Consider joining an ASLA committee earlier in the year to show you have a commitment beyond the exotic location. Some committees schedule meet-ups during the conference, though members still pay their own way to attend.

Tip #4 – Strength in Numbers

Discuss the topic with your coworkers. If you can get a coalition to help make a presentation and sell the idea, it appears less daunting than if you were to take it upon yourself. It may not be feasible to send everyone at once, but the comradery of your group may appeal to your employer to either 1) support a percentage of the fees or 2) send several you, rotating who attends on a yearly basis.

Tip #5 – Present

This goes hand in hand with Tip #1. Prepare a presentation to give to the decision makers in your office. Practice what you have to say to ensure it comes through concise and on message. Remember to draw a clear line between attending the conference and your professional growth.

Tip #6 – Get Back-Up

Reach out to ASLA directly for resources and assistance. Staff and volunteers are happy to direct you to resources that can help make this discussion simpler. They can provide statistics and conference information to back up what you're saying.

Conclusion:

This conference is full of the very people I mentioned before. They have so much valuable information to share which you can use to educate your firm on national trends and the direction of the profession. The conference is an opportunity to learn and advance your career in a setting outside of the office, which will make you a more well-rounded landscape architect and also make you an even more valuable employee. When you begin to weigh the value of the trip and how it affects your development as a landscape architect and the value you will bring back to the firm, you can build a strong case for your attendance.

What We're Reading

A Merger Makes
A New Market

How to Negotiate Salary: 3
Winning Strategies

What We're Listening To

Depave Paradise

When Good Placemakers
Go Bad

Looking Ahead

Design + Diversity Conference:
August 1 - 3, 2019

Conference on Landscape
Architecture: November 15 - 18, 2019