



How to network at the first ever virtual Massachusetts Conference for Women

2020 VIRTUAL NETWORKING GUIDE



If there is anything 2020 has proven, it's the importance of connection. That's why the Massachusetts Conference for Women and official networking sponsor Cisco are excited to bring powerful *new* networking opportunities to our first-ever virtual conference, including:

1. Facilitated Networking Discussions.

Your invitation to join group discussions with the Massachusetts Conference for Women board members.

2. Peer Networking Chat Groups.

We know you have things to talk about this year!

3. Public Session Chats.

An opportunity to share comments and ask questions during breakout and keynote sessions.

4. Private 1:1 and Group Messaging.

Your place to "meet up" with other attendees throughout the Conference.

5. Exhibitor Office Hours.

Have a question for an exhibitor? They'll be available to chat live on Dec 10.

6. Smart Matches on the App.

A new way to find the right people to connect with. Brought to you by Cisco.

Meeting others online requires different strategies than networking in-person, and the virtual environment offers unique opportunities to connect. Here are the Conference for Women's top tips for taking advantage of these invaluable offerings and meeting the right people at this year's event:

SET YOUR OBJECTIVE

During the jam-packed conference day, knowing your networking objective can help you focus your time. For example:

- If you are networking to find a new job, spend some time chatting one-on-one with recruiters in the Exhibit Hall and don't miss the facilitated networking discussion for job seekers.
- Looking for a mentor? Check out the peer networking chat groups and privately message individuals who give great advice.

BE PREPARED

Some planning can help you take advantage of all there is to offer on conference day. Download the MassWomen app, brought to you by Cisco, complete your profile, and spend some time reviewing "My Matches." Job seekers, brush up your resume because many companies are actively recruiting. And review the day's agenda in advance so that you can plan out the best options for meeting the right people.

PRO TIP: *Schedule networking into your day and week. You will be more likely to make connections if you have blocked off time to make new connections and follow up with the people you meet on conference day.*

PUBLICIZE YOUR PARTICIPATION

Get on the radar of speakers, exhibitors, and other attendees by sharing that you are attending the conference on social media. Use the hashtag #MassWomen before and during the conference so that others will know to look for you at the event.

PRO TIP: *Networking online can feel anonymous, but posting a selfie to the Massachusetts Conference for Women social wall using the hashtag #MassWomen can help put a face to a name.*

PITCH PERFECT

Your ability to sum up who you are and what you can offer is vital in a virtual environment. Move beyond your job title to get to the heart of what you do, and don't forget to tailor your description to your audience. Humor helps, too!

PRO TIP: *Actively engaging in public breakout session chat can provide others with insight into who you are and an opportunity to connect with you. Share your expertise, links to additional resources, your ah-ha moments, and even invitations to chat privately.*

Chat Best Practices

- Be direct, succinct, kind, and most of all, be yourself.
- Comments cannot be deleted, so please be thoughtful and avoid offensive language.
- If you find yourself in a back-and-forth discussion, consider taking the conversation into a private group chat.
- The moderator will post relevant links in the chat, but CFW welcomes you to share additional resources or articles as appropriate.

CONNECT INDIVIDUALLY

Whether you've identified someone you'd like to meet through pre-conference research, smart matches on the app, or within a chat or discussion, connecting individually is the next step to forming a relationship. Private 1:1 messaging allows you to connect with anyone at the conference. Exhibitors will also be available to chat during office hours.

NOTE that private messages are NOT saved in the platform. Please save contact information separately.

PRO TIP: *The best private messages include specific questions or offers. Here's an example:*

"Your comment during Lisa Nichols' session about re-energizing was so insightful. Have you found other ways to reinvent as a leader this year? I'm a new manager and would love to learn from someone more seasoned."

FOLLOW UP

Once you have connected with individuals during the conference, you will need a strategy to nurture those relationships beyond conference day. Start by connecting on LinkedIn and/or social media. To each new connection, post or tweet a quick "Nice meeting you at the Mass Conference for Women!" You'll grow your social following and establish an avenue for further connection.

PRO TIP: *If you meet several people with similar goals or interests, consider starting a mastermind group. These small, professional networks provide mutual support and accountability in a structured way. Asking new acquaintances to join a group can be easier than asking for a one-on-one conversation, and the group structure allows you to support and ask for support from multiple people. Read more about starting a mastermind group [here](#).*

Facilitated Networking Best Practices

- Set an alarm for 8 am on 12/10 when registration opens in the Cisco Networking Lounge, accessible from the Conference Lobby. Participation is extremely limited, and available on a first come, first serve basis.
- Turn on your camera when the discussion begins so that others can see you!
- As the discussion ends, keep the conversation going by connecting with other participants via private chat or on LinkedIn.

Due to the popularity of these offerings, and out of respect for other attendees, we ask that you sign up for only ONE of these sessions. If at the time of the event, there is space available, you are welcome to join a 2nd session.

CODE OF CONDUCT: The Conferences for Women (CFW) requests that attendees treat each other with respect and remain civil at all times in private or public chat or group discussion. CFW reserves the right to take any action deemed necessary to maintain the civility of private or public chat or group discussion, including but not limited to removing any attendee from the event. Chats are not to be used for commercial purposes; spamming or flooding disrupts the chat for other users and will not be tolerated.