



Make your case to attend the RCOT Annual Conference and check out our Tips for getting the best out of Conference

In the current economic climate, securing approval and time off from work to attend conference may be more challenging than it has been in the past. One way to gain support and funding is to make a strong business case outlining how your organisation will benefit from you attending conference. You should also give due consideration to how you can ensure that your conference experience is value for money and meets elements of your continuing professional development (CPD).

Writing a business case

If you haven't produced a business case already, here are some simple steps you can follow to get you started:

1. Write down the three to five most important strategies or issues being addressed in your organisation right now.
2. Think about how you personally contribute to those strategies. How is your work aligned with the organisation's overall strategy? Make a list of your personal contribution to the strategy.
3. Identify skills and knowledge that you need in order to work with your service users and manage your case load.
4. Consider how attendance can contribute to your career development and CPD. Cross-reference with your performance/appraisal objectives and the four Pillars of Practice in the RCOT Career Development Framework. For further details see <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/learning-zone/career-development-framework>
5. Visit the Conference website www.rcotannualconference.com to identify the appropriate sessions in the programme that will help you to contribute to your organisation's strategy.
6. Make a note of speakers or other people at Annual Conference you would like to meet.
7. Set out details of the sessions that will particularly help you contribute to the organisation's strategy.

4. One week prior to the conference, complete your **personal programme**. Include the people you're meeting as well as which sessions you'll be attending.

During Annual Conference

Pace yourself – conference can be intensive so whilst you will need to ensure that you are satisfying any commitments you have made to attend sessions and meet people, do take a few moments as needed, for example to reflect on what you are learning or jot down key messages for application and follow-up once you are back at work.

1. Refer to your plan and the conference programme to ensure that you find yourself in the right place at the right time!
2. Make sure you talk to the exhibitors; ask questions about their products and share feedback on your experiences.
3. Meet up with those people you have contacted in advance: if their time is limited it can be useful to have written yourself some prompts so that you remember to ask any specific questions/raise particular issues.
4. Visit the RCOT Stand and talk to Officers about the work they are doing and the resources available to support you in your practice and continuing professional development.
5. Take time to stroll round the poster displays and talk to the presenters of those that interest you.
6. Social media can be useful to make contact with others and to follow the conference activities.
7. If you are an RCOT member the Annual General Meeting, held during Conference, is an important opportunity to hear first-hand about the business and activities of the professional body.
8. If you have a few spaces in your schedule, don't forget that you can always "Stop, Do, Relax..." in our zone out some where you can usefully spend some time in reflection, conversation, and some hands on occupation.

After Annual Conference

It can be easy for the buzz and inspiration experienced at Conference to dissipate as you return to the day job, but don't lose momentum!

1. After conference write **a summary of what you have learnt** and how you will use the information you received and contacts you made to contribute to your organisation's business aims.
2. **Submit the summary to your manager.** The purpose of this summary is to make your next conference request even easier than the first. Once your line manager understands that you and your organisation can benefit from conference, they'll be more likely to give a favourable decision about future attendance.
3. Consider including your attendance at conference within your appraisal process and discuss the benefits of your attendance to yourself, your team, and your service users, as well as for your organisation in your supervision sessions.
4. Disseminate knowledge you gained which is useful to others in your organisation by sharing with your colleagues. You could consider facilitating a CPD session such as

a post-conference 'Brown Bag' lunch meeting; feeding back at a team meeting; or writing an item in a team newsletter.

5. Follow-up with the contacts you made at the Conference, and build on any networks which may support you in your field of work.
6. Discuss with your colleagues how the work you are doing might be innovative and would benefit from being shared with other occupational therapists. An abstract submission could be your next step, and it could be you presenting at the next RCOT Conference!

Useful reading

Bhattacharya S (2014) Was attending the conference worth value for money? *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery*, 47(1), 1-3. Doi: 10.4103/0970-0358.129614. Available at:

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4075195