



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

2021 VIRTUAL NETWORKING GUIDE



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

1. Facilitated Networking Discussions.

Your invitation to join group discussions with leaders from the California Conference for Women community.

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 March 4.

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 job, don't miss the Virtual Career Fair from 3-5 pm, where you can speak 1:1 with recruiters.
- 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. Fill out your profile on the virtual platform thoughtfully, and include a photo. 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 #CalWomen 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 California Conference for Women social wall using the hashtag #CalWomen 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, 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 Herminia Ibarra's session about your leadership style was so poignant. Have you found you've had to reinvent your approach since working virtually? 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 California 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 3/4 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.

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.