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MAXIMIZING YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT BY ATTENDING APCO'S CONFERENCE

Understanding you and your ECC's needs while taking advantage of conference opportunities are keys to making the most of APCO 2020.

By Stephen Martini

In the wake of the arrival of the largest pandemic in a century, public safety agencies and industry partners are perhaps more focused than ever on two realities: providing quality, continuous emergency communications and stretching every dollar during extremely lean budgets.

Facing those realities as we approach APCO 2020 in Orlando this August, each attendee must assess how to get the most out of attending. Here are some key steps to making the most of this year's conference.

Before you go, identify what you need to obtain. Use the Interoperability Continuum to assess your agency's preparedness to face any threat, whether natural disaster, lean budgets or something else.

The Interoperability Continuum is a tool developed by the Department of Homeland Security designed to assist emergency response agencies and policymakers to plan and implement interoperability solutions for data and voice communications. The tool identifies five critical success elements that must be addressed to achieve a sophisticated interoperability solution including: governance, standard operating procedures (SOPs); technology; training and exercises; and usage of interoperable communications. These elements can be used to measure success in a variety of public safety communications initiatives.

Are you facing a governance opportunity – a partnership with a shared radio system, a consolidation, or regional CAD or ESInet? Can your policies and procedures use sharpening or are you implementing text or video into your ECC and need to discuss creating a new policy with those already doing so? Perhaps your CAD or call processing equipment is nearing end of life and it's time to explore a new solution. How are you teaching your employees the basics or ensuring they stay current with evolving trends? Are you exercising with your personnel and your resources to make sure you are prepared to respond effectively when an incident occurs?

Armed with a clear understanding of your agency's needs, assess the professional development sessions offered in related

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educational tracks. Investigate the agencies participating in the ECC tours to determine if any are using technologies or procedures or facing similar challenges. (One note on tours – don't be fooled into thinking you should only visit agencies of a similar size as your own. The receipt and delivery of a single call, and the work at the individual console to triage and dispatch is very similar at ECCs large and small; there's something to be learned in all of them.) Identify which industry partners will be in the exhibit hall, and make plans to visit with those providing solutions around your specific opportunities. Investigate networking events, and learn from your colleagues around the world who face the same challenges.

After you decide what you need to know and how you will learn it, identify who needs to benefit from your attendance.

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are in the business of public service, so the citizens you serve and the field responders you support must see an immediate impact from your involvement at APCO 2020. Goals your agency is trying to accomplish should drive your focus at APCO 2020.

Next, your team must see the benefit of your participation. If you're an administrator, spend some time exploring ways to invest in your personnel. Consider sitting in some chairs, or investigating some consoles from the perspective of creature comforts (lighting, heat/air, ergonomics, dirty power for personal devices, etc.), or attend a session focused on recognition and combatting stress. If you're a technician or telecommunicator, spend some time attending a session about trending legislation, emerging or alternate technologies, or engaging more fully in the profession.

Plan to spend about 50% of your time at the conference seeking answers to these questions.

Third, you must invest time in you – what you don't know, what you need to know, and dabbling a little bit in the things that intimidate, confuse or scare you.

Of the various ways to engage at the conference, find those things that will help you get stronger in the segment of public safety communications you currently serve. Then spend some more time exploring things in your lane that you don't know much about. Most importantly, find the thing that simply intimidates you (is it budgeting, or radio networking, or caller interrogation, or policy?) and be willing to



sit at the feet of a good teacher, asking them to help you understand it better.

Simply put, you must invest in your abilities. Give to others from a position of strength. You must be confident and effective in your current role before you can engage with your team to contribute to the success of your department.

Plan to spend about 25% of your time at the conference investing in what you need to know, 15% on what you need to know more about and 5% learning about something you don't know anything about.

For those doing the math, you have 5% left to expend your energy while at APCO 2020. How should you spend it? Identify how you will give back! How can you engage with the association? Participate in a committee? Explore the history of your state chapter? Giving back to APCO is one of the most effective ways to involve your agency, grow your team and invest in yourself.

Finally, be willing to put in the time necessary to take full advantage of every opportunity. Conference days start early and finish late. This isn't a vacation or time off of work.

Time at APCO 2020 is a hyper-focused, tightly-packed series of opportunities to draw the best pieces of your potential out into the sunlight so they can blossom. Avoid the temptation to sleep in, go shopping or turn in early, as the biggest benefit to attending APCO 2020 is the opportunity to connect with other amazing public safety communications professionals who are eager to connect with you! ●

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CDE EXAM #54567

- 1) The Interoperability Continuum is a helpful guide to understand the needs of your agency.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 2) Which of the following is not to measure performance on the Interoperability Continuum.
 - a. Governance
 - b. Media Relations
 - c. Training & Exercises
 - d. Usage
- 3) What should you do before you arrive at APCO 2020?
 - a. Determine the goals and needs of your agency
 - b. Determine how much time to spend at the nearest beach
 - c. Plan to spend an afternoon shopping alone
 - d. A & C
- 4) Professional development tracks offer educational sessions to help individuals grow in knowledge of specific segments of the public safety communications industry.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 5) Benefits of visiting an ECC during a tour include:
 - a. Seeing technology in action
 - b. Reviewing procedures you are considering
 - c. Discussing similar issues with other ECC leaders
 - d. All of the above
- 6) When touring ECCs, you will only benefit from visiting centers similar in size to yours.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 7) Who should benefit from your attendance at APCO 2020?
 - a. Your agency, your team, and yourself
 - b. Only yourself
 - c. Only your agency
 - d. Only your team
- 8) What percentage of your time should you spend focusing on the needs of your team and your agency?
 - a. 25%
 - b. 75%
 - c. 50%
 - d. None of the above
- 9) You should invest at least 5% of your time learning something you don't know anything about.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 10) What percentage of your time should you spend seeking opportunities to give back to the association?
 - a. 15%
 - b. 5%
 - c. 30%
 - d. None of the Above

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