

*No matter what our level of seniority, most of us have to justify the cost and time of attending industry events.*

*Often the people you report to do not fully understand the importance of the benefits received by conference attendees. This document provides you with some tools you can use to build the business case for attending the upcoming 2020 Stand Up for Trucking in Washington, DC. We hope you find this information useful.*

**Understanding Motivations: How your Manager is Likely to Make a Decision about Your Attendance**

You’ll need to make the case that the best use of your training/education budget is attending the NASSTRAC 2020 Stand Up for Trucking Spring Meeting. Even if there is “no budget,” your organization or institution may still have discretionary funds they can tap into. In this instance, you will need to make a case for the benefits of your attendance.

Your manager is likely to make the decision to approve your attendance based on business benefits. He/she will be looking for you to convince them of several things:

* There are clearly defined benefits to attendance (ROI)
* The investment is reasonable
* The time out of the office is well spent

**Understanding the Benefits That Impress**

The two main benefits of attending the conference are networking and education.

Although networking is a very important benefit, it can be difficult to quantify the value to your organization. Many attendees report that hearing of solutions or approaches to problems while in a networking environment is often the most valuable aspect of a conference – but it’s speculative and hard to measure.

So rather than focus on the social aspects of networking, instead focus on specific education, the actionable learning that will directly benefit your organization.

*The best way to do that is to link specific published conference sessions and speakers to address specific challenges you’re facing and link that education to specific actions that you will take that will benefit your organization.*

Details are vital. Some details you’ll need to specify include:

**Session content.** Review the [agenda](https://nasstracspringmeeting.org/ehome/499812/agenda/) and identify the sessions that have particular relevance or resonance to your organization’s current situation. Specifically identify sessions which promise…

* Examples of successes delivered by speakers from other shippers/3PLs around the country.
* Information regarding challenges that your company is facing.
* New regulations/legislation that will impact your supply chain.
* Strategies to help you reduce costs or “do more with less.”

**To ensure you avoid mistakes**. Candid sessions will help you avoid repeating costly implementation mistakes made by others.

**To help you do even more with what you already have.** Learn how to maximize the value of your existing equipment and staff.

**Best practices.** Some of the sessions are geared towards benchmarking best practices. Your attendance and report means that your team can get a clear picture of what others are doing.

**Training.** Which sessions are right for you? Most are designed to help attendees evaluate a set of tools and/or approaches that are immediately actionable back at your office.

**Hill Meetings.** The NASSTRAC 2020 Stand Up for Trucking Spring Meeting involves our attendees joining in meeting with congressional representatives. We will be joining with our motor carriers and 3PL’s in support of legislation that will mitigate risk when qualifying your carriers, working to achieve some measure of productivity improvement for LTL carriers, and stressing the importance of infrastructure to our nation’s supply chains.

**Quantifying the Benefits**

Although you might understand the benefits of the sessions, your company may not. Therefore, to be most effective in justifying attendance, you will need to clearly articulate the connection between your organization’s knowledge and skill requirements and the conference program.

Do not assume your manager will be able to automatically make those distinctions.

To do this, think about the issues currently facing your organization and then look at the meeting website, highlighting programs that will address your needs, and use this information as part of your justification letter. Also, bring the session descriptions and a list of the needs and the relevant programming along with you when you meet with your manager.

**Justifying the Investment**

**Calculating the Actual Investment**

Before you can even begin to justify investing in attending the conference, you need to calculate the total investment. To do so, you can use the following Investment Worksheet.

Investment Worksheet

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Conference Registration |  | $495 Member $595 Non-Member |
| Materials Fees | None | Included |
| Flight | Try a Web travel service to get a quick esti­mate | $ |
| Lodging | [View details here](https://nasstracspringmeeting.org/ehome/499812/hotelandtravel/) (rooms for $265 + tax/night) | $ |
| Transportation: Airport to/from Hotel | Taxis are roughly $25 one way. Uber & Lyft also available. | $ |
| Food Per Diem | Conference fee includes breakfast & lunch Monday & and Breakfast on Tuesday. Evening receptions Sunday, and Monday. | $ |
| **Subtotal** |  | **$** |
| **Total Number of Employees Attending** |  |  |
| **Multiply subtotal by #employees attending** |  | **$** |

**Time well spent**

**This meeting is real work!**

Your institution needs to understand that, far from being a pleasant diversion, you will be working as hard during the duration of the meeting as you would in your office. Your day will start at 7:30am with preparation, networking, and breakfast before the general sessions begin at 8:30am. You’ll be working through lunch and will be hard at it until the meeting wraps after 5:00pm. No social events take place during educational programming. In addition you’ll be networking during evening receptions until 7:00pm Sunday and Monday night.

**Advance preparation and goal setting**

Identifying what you want from the meeting is essential – but also don’t forget to ask what your company needs from the meeting. Request a call or meeting before you attend the meeting and ask for specific information you should seek out or questions you should answer – then pledge to do all you can in those three days to obtain it.

**Learning that benefits you and your peers**  
Offer to provide your manager and colleagues with a full report on your attendance and what you learned. Explain that you’ll take detailed notes at the meeting and within two weeks of your return provide a post-event report and meeting that will communicate and share both the key lessons learned and the specific action points you recommend taking based on your learning experience.

Your commitment to share the knowledge you received with others on your team will dramatically increase ROI of your attendance. Additionally, by tangibly demonstrating the lessons learned from the conference, leadership should be more willing to fund your participation in the future.

The best reports encourage people to come and ask you further questions. There is rarely much value in a 10-page report. Instead, a two or three-page summary, with URLs and pointers is more impressive. Another option is to offer to meet with other leaders from your company to provide a recap the first week after the conference.

Making presentations to others in your group who did not attend is also an excellent way to deepen your education while also sharing valuable knowledge and techniques.

**Implement, Implement, Implement**

It’s essential to convey that this meeting is not abstract academics. We demand that our presenters provide practical takeaways. Your sessions will be packed full of proven and tested real-world tips, trends, and techniques that will benefit your company. If you’ve attended other NASSTRAC events and can attribute real tangible value to your attendance, be sure to mention them.