Making the Most of Your ASNA Convention Experience

For the past few months, I have worked closely with the planning, development and execution of ASNA unconvention 2014. Having attended previous editions of ASNA and organising this year’s upcoming convention, I have been privileged to gain insights into the conference and how to make the most of it. This article aims to give you an idea about what you can expect from unconvention 2014 and how you can make the best of your experience.

ASNA conventions offer a plethora of social and professional events, including the traditional Career Fair and Seminars, and new additions such as the Case Competition and the Professional Panel. It can be difficult to stay efficient when so many diverse and enriching experiences are presented in a short time frame. This is why it is important to go in with preparation.

Step 1: Goal
Convention attendees are always in unique situations coming into the convention: some are actively looking for a co-op job, some are looking to reconnect with peers, while others are just looking to learn about the profession. Depending on the goal, their choices and experiences are likely to be varied. What is your goal this year?

Step 2: Plan of Action
A plan of action should be devised based on the schedule of events and your goal. Different events present you with different opportunities. Let us explore a few ASNA-specific events and how you can approach them:

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- Career Fair: A year ago, when I was on the hunt for a co-op job, I had a simple goal: to first meet with only the shortlisted companies for which I wanted to work. A strategy is key to being efficient with your time as you won’t be able to charm all 20 employers in a limited amount of time. Keep in mind which companies are actively hiring and always remember that for networking, quality is much more important than quantity.

- Professional Panel: A brand new event this year, the Professional Panel provides an opportunity to ask questions about the macro issues and learn about the personal career narratives of the panelists. It is helpful for budding actuaries as a wide range of topics will be discussed at the event.

- Seminars: With topics ranging from Catastrophe Modelling to Financial Models to How to Land Your First Job, seminars are conceived to get you thinking, help you understand the industry better and foster dialogue on actuarial topics. This year, we have a record 18 seminars that you can attend to expand your knowledge.

Step 3: Elevator pitch
It is amazing how many random encounters you can have at conference. This is why it is key to have pitch ready so you can capitalise on the opportunity. The pitch should be a mix of personal and professional attributes. The goal here is not to “sell” yourself as the best candidate, but instead to converse and build a relationship. They can judge whether you are a good fit for themselves.

Step 4: Follow-up
This part is commonly misunderstood as “simply adding everyone you met at the event on LinkedIn with the same generic invite”. The follow-up is crucial because it shows your commitment in building the relationship beyond just a meet and greet. The right approach is reaching out to your new connections in whichever medium they would prefer, and making an effort to sustain the relationship by planning a meetup on the next possible date. The only way to be remembered is by appearing in front of them again, and not just on their home feed.

Building a network of valuable relationships is extremely important, especially in the actuarial industry since it has such an exclusive membership. As you advance through your exams and make your way into full time work, you will see familiar faces in every step of the way. This is why it is advantageous to utilize the opportunities ASNA presents and start leaving your own mark in the industry.

Monojit Samanta
2014 Convention Co-Chair
ANÉA-ASNA
Convention Memories

**Brittany Lee:** Last year at Winnipeg’s ASNA, I had so much fun talking to everyone on the Friday, that I had lost my voice the next morning. I could barely speak for the next two days. Sounding like a hoarse man, I continued to socialize and meet new people at the convention. Luckily for me, the employer that hired me heard my new voice and chuckled at the fact that I had work on the coming Monday. Although somewhat painful and embarrassing, it was an amazing weekend full of fun, new friends, and memorable experiences.

**Isabel Ji:** Passionately belting out Justin Bieber’s “Baby” at ASNA 2013 Social Night’s karaoke event...with an even more enthusiastic Manulife representative!

**Monojit Samanta:** ASNA 2012, Social night: when I was called the "Brown Barney Stinson" by a fellow attendee from Concordia University, Matthieu Hubert.
**Catherine Sun:** Sharing my "Big Dipper" discovery with company representatives during an afternoon reinsurance snack party.

**Matthew Cheung:** Found a summer job after talking to Munich Re representatives for half an hour at the Career Fair

**Giancarlo Lahura:** Letting loose at the karaoke event and nearly losing my voice.

**Annie Que:** Realizing that I am not as good at using chopsticks as I thought during one of the games at Mingling Party.

**Stephane Hamade:** Getting back to Toronto without leaving any of the uWaterloo students in Winnipeg.
The convention will begin in the afternoon on Friday, January 3rd.

**Mingling Party (Friday Afternoon)**

The Mingling Party is an event sponsored by Sun Life Financial and will allow students to mingle around and get to know students from other universities.

**Career Fair (Friday Evening)**

The Career Fair is the highlight of the convention as it assembles the majority of our attendees -- sponsors and students alike -- for several hours of impactful networking. This is an excellent opportunity to connect with recruiters, learn about diverse actuarial roles, and discover more about top actuarial employers.

**Professional Panel (Friday Evening)**

The Professional Panel, a brand new initiative this year, will be held alongside the Career Fair. Industry professionals are invited to participate in the discussion of various actuarial topics and answer industry-related questions that the students may have. This allows for greater interaction between the students and the actuarial community. It is also a great opportunity for organizations to further establish their reputation and share industry knowledge, values, and insights.

**Interview Sessions (Saturday - Morning & Afternoon)**

One of the main goals of the ASNA convention is to match student talent with employer needs. Employers who collect student résumés at the Career Fair may be interviewing select candidates throughout the day on Saturday.

**Lunch (Saturday Afternoon)**

Buffet Lunch with a guest presentation from the Casualty Actuarial Society.

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Seminars (Saturday – Morning & Afternoon)

We are inviting esteemed guest speakers to deliver high quality seminars. Sessions cover a wide variety of topics that are designed to educate, advise, and inspire. Whether you are a new student curious about what the actuarial profession has to offer, or a seasoned upper-year looking to deepen your knowledge of actuarial practices, there is a seminar that caters to your interests and experience.

Case Competition (Saturday Afternoon)

Following its successful premiere in the last convention, we will be holding the second annual ASNA Case Competition this year. Top students from each university will compete as they put their technical and business skills to the test before a panel of judges composed of experienced professionals. The case study promises to challenge the students, and presents them with an opportunity to showcase their actuarial competency.

Gala Dinner (Saturday Evening)

Gala dinner with keynote speaker from the Canadian Institute of Actuaries

Social Night (Saturday Evening)

With karaoke, speed-networking and a casino, students will enjoy a great night with an open cash bar sponsored by Manulife Financial. This night will be another highlight of the convention.