

Angela Answers

Dear Angela: I'm attending a couple of conferences this winter. What can I do to make the most of the experience?

BY Angela Myles Beeching

Whether it's your 1st or your 21st conference, what you get out of it will have everything to do with your attitude and your expectations—it comes down to mindset.

So instead of offering tips on how to “work a room,” let's focus on our thinking, attitude, and assumptions, because with the right mindset, it's hard to go wrong.

First, watch out for clues that you're operating with a **transactional mindset**—valuing transactions over relationships. This is self-centered, “what can I get from this person?” thinking. It can stem from an aggressive focus or worry about booking the next gig. It's limiting and short-term in nature, and it reduces other people to “prospects” or “targets.” *Not recommended.*

The transactional mindset stems from what author Steven Covey termed **scarcity thinking**. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey explains it's the notion of “... life as having only so much, as though there were only one pie out there. And if someone were to get a big piece of the pie, it would mean less for everybody else. The Scarcity Mentality is the zero-sum paradigm of life.” It keeps us rooted in comparison and score-keeping and can keep us isolated, distrustful, and thinking small.

An alternative to these traps is to dial into what Covey calls our **abundance mindset**. It starts from a place of optimism. Instead of comparing ourselves to others and resenting their success, we're inspired by and energized to learn from them. And instead of focusing on immediate transactions and needs, we think long-term and focus on cultivating relationships.

By seeing the glass as half full, we're actively geared toward finding creative solutions and new opportunities. And we get further faster because people like interacting with us.

Of course, you may still be worried and focused on getting your next gig and meeting your season goals. But your *mindset* determines how you go about doing this and the results you achieve.

Music conferences bring together performers, composers, managers, presenters, publishers, educators, and students—the whole community. How do you want to be known within that community? What's the energy you want to add to the room?

Take a cue from Ben Zander, co-author of “The Art of Possibility.” Ben recommends asking yourself, “How can I be a contribution?”

It's about being less focused on “me” and more on “WE.” Be curious and fully present with others, interested in their work and their ideas. By focusing on others, we'll see more possibilities and needs we can fill. Over time, that's what creates success.

With an abundance mindset and a focus on making a contribution, you can set yourself up to find unexpected inspiration and opportunities, allies, and new ways to be of service to others through music.

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