

Convention Career Connection

Putting The Pro Into Your Con

(SAMPLE EDITION)

By Steven Savage

This is a sample of the full book, available at
<http://www.conventioncareerconnection.com/>

**Convention Career Connection
Putting The Pro Into Your Con**

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The Staff of the Atlanta Fantasy Fair: My first convention so many years ago that showed me the magic of the con scene.

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Tamara: For her suggestions and enthusiasm.

Barb: For her editing, and pointing out my strange obsession with dashes.

Arius: For his cover art. He came up with a great concept that worked perfectly with the system in the book.

DEDICATION:

This book is dedicated to everyone who runs the conventions of the world. I hope I make your difficult jobs easier and help you reach your audiences.

Special Thanks

A number of conventions inspired me to do this book. If I missed anyone, my apologies.

Thanks to the conventions that have given me a chance to speak and present and attend over the years:

- AODSF – <http://www.aodsf.org/>
- Anime North – <http://www.animenorth.com/>
- Anime St. George - <http://animesg.net/>
- HyperCon - <http://www.hyperbooster.com/>
- Kin-Yoobi Con - <http://www.gzronline.com/>
- OhayoCon - <http://www.ohayocon.org/>

Thanks to the conventions whose staff let them be profiled in <http://www.fantopro.com/>

- Anime USA - <http://www.animeusa.org/>
- Autumn-Dream
- Daishocon - <http://www.daishocon.com/>
- Erie Anime Experience - <http://erie-anime-experience.com/>
- GeekGirlCon – <http://www.geekgirlcon/>
- Hal-Con - <http://www.hal-con.com/>
- Icon - <http://www.iowa-icon.com/>
- Mobicon - <http://www.mobicon.org/>
- Odyssey Con - <http://www.oddcon.com/>
- Templecon - <http://www.templecon.org/>
- Tigercon - <http://www.tigercon.org/>
- The Queen City Kamikaze Convention – <http://www.queencitykamikaze.com/>
- Windycon - <http://www.windycon.org/>

Finally, thanks to all the conventions out there who have inspired me, my friends, and the people I've talked to over the decades.

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Introduction

I remember the Atlanta Fantasy Fair. It was my first science fiction/media convention, or "con" in the vernacular. As a young geek in the "80's", I was exposed to the costumes, the events, the dealer's rooms, and the videos that make up the typical convention. It was filled with friendly people who were just like me – total geeks.

That's when I became a believer in what conventions could do. That event left an impression on me that has lasted all of my life – I saw the power of concentrated geekiness.

I've gone to many conventions over the years, from small events to giant assemblies of fans, artists, professionals, and dealers. There were good ones and there were bad ones. I fell into the convention scene, out of it, and back in again because frankly I couldn't stay away.

In all those years I did see some "pro" activities, such as panels on writing and art, but I didn't think of them very often. My interests at conventions were largely social. I had my focus, and most conventions serve a wide base; professional events weren't a big thing to me.

That view changed when I had what I called my "Fan To Pro" revelation. This eye-opening experience is mostly documented in another book, "Fan To Pro." The short story is that my friend Bonnie and I had a realization that many fans, geeks, and otaku could use some advice on how to turn their interests into careers. We kicked around several projects, at first settling on a blog (<http://www.fantopro.com/>), then branching into the abovementioned book, and of course, running events at conventions.

Eventually, I started profiling conventions in the blog that had professionally-oriented events. I began calling on my own experiences and theories to propose ways conventions could add career events, also recording them in the blog. The more I examined the conventions past and present, the more I looked over forms of training and instruction, the more ideas I had to help conventions run events to help people's professional skills and interests develop.

Of course, at some point I began thinking I really ought to do a book about how science fiction, anime, and other media conventions could do events to help people improve their career while having fun at the same time. I knew I wanted to create a handbook to help people come up with ideas that were both original and useful for their attendees.

As you've probably guessed, you're reading that book. I did get off my backside and do it.

This book is my way of helping out all of you who are running and attending conventions, and a way of doing more for the wonderful event culture I've enjoyed since my teen years.

This book provides a system to help you come up with career and job-oriented events for a convention you may run or participate in. It provides you with a method to organize your thoughts and ideas about career workshops, speeches, and the like. It also provides a large list of suggestions for the different components that make up a good career event.

This book is going to be a bit skewed towards the kind of conventions I'm used to - science fiction, anime, comics, and fantasy. However, whatever kind of media event you run, it's meant for you - sports card collectibles, classic films, whatever people enjoy - and whatever they might be able to turn into a career.

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It's my hope that it will help you run conventions and do events that will not only improve people's career opportunities, but also let your attendees have fun while doing it.

So go on, enjoy. Be sure to contact me if you have any feedback, from things I should have added to tales of your own pro-fan events.

- Steven Savage

<http://www.stevensavage.com/>

You can find out more about this book at:

<http://www.conventioncareerconnection.com/>

Chapter 1: What This Is About? Who Is This For?

So going beyond the usual fluff and personal details of this book's introduction, just who is this book for and how does it work?

This book is for people who:

- 1) Run or work at science fiction conventions, anime conventions, gaming get-togethers, sports collectable shows, and so on who want to add some career-oriented events to their usual content.
- 2) Speak and present at career-oriented events happening at science fiction conventions, gaming gatherings, and so on.
- 3) Are thinking of speaking or presenting on careers at various events and want to plan ahead.
- 4) Are doing a combination of the above (and who should probably be sharing their time management skills with the rest of us).

By now you probably know if this book is for you. However, I'm pretty sure if you've picked up this book, you already knew it was for you (or at least your friends).

So, what subjects does the book cover?

- 1) A quick and easy system called TASK+, pronounced "TASK Plus," that acts as both a guide to creating an event for career-minded attendees, a checklist to make sure you didn't miss anything, and a brainstorming tool to inspire you.
- 2) A collection of ideas that helps you put together career-focused workshops, panels, and the like. Each idea plugs into the TASK+ system.
- 3) A large Appendix with even more useful information.

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That's what this book is: guide, brainstorming tool, and a collection of ideas to inspire you, guide you, or provide you something to use when imagination fails.

Now, I'm sure you've got great new events to design, so let's get right to the system that will help you create unique and interesting career activities, panels, and workshops for your convention.

Welcome to TASK+!

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON THIS SAMPLE: The TASK+ system is a way of breaking down – and building up – events. Each event consists of five different categories: Teachers, Approaches, Subjects, Keepers, and Pluses.

In the full book, I go into detail about using this system and creating events that help your convention help people with careers.

Let's take a look at one of the sections that explores the TASK+ components – the teacher section!

Chapter 4: Teachers

There's a simple rule for your events: no Teacher (or Teachers), no panel, seminar, or workshop.

Teachers, the “T” in TASK+, are indispensable to any career-related convention happening because someone has to run the events, be the expert, and communicate with people. Even if you're running a DVD and not having anything remotely human interacting with the audience, the people that made the video are your Teachers (oh, and someone has to run the tape, but they may not qualify).

To find a the right Teacher look for the following traits:

Know the Subject

That's kind of a given, but there are different kinds of knowledge. A more academic lecture means one kind of knowledge is needed, a hands-on workshop requires another. Make sure your Teacher knows the Subject in the right way for your event's goals.

Speak From Experience

Experience is vital in a good Teacher. First, it's a testimonial that they know what they're doing, which means they actually have useful information to share. Second, it means the audience will take them more seriously. Third, they will, hopefully, have the experience in communicating their knowledge due to said experience.

Enthusiasm

A boring Teacher means people don't listen or don't think the Teacher cares. Without enthusiasm people are going to get less out of a Teacher's knowledge, skills, and experience. Sometimes you've got access to a less-than-thrilling Teacher, and you'll just need to find ways to keep people engaged.

Good Teachers know how interesting they are – or aren't – and will be able to help you out.

A Source of "Keepers" and "Pluses"

A good Teacher may have handouts, source material, websites, online courses, free e-books, etc. You may find they provide some of the content and follow-up activities important to a good event. With luck and research, the "K+" part of your event is taken care of thanks to the "T".

When picking a Teacher or Teachers, also keep in mind:

- They may not be professionals, but should *be* professional - have the proper attitude, gravitas, and respect for their subject matter. That doesn't mean they can't be silly, humorous, or light. They just know what to be serious about – and when.
- Their background not be "directly" relevant to the Subject you're focusing on, but they have relevant and unique information. An editor can lecture on writing, a network programmer for video games can speak on video game careers, and a voice actor can speak on the animation industry.
- You may just be the Teacher that is needed!

With that said, lets look at the types of Teachers you may encounter or need, and see if this gives you any ideas . . .

Academics and Teachers

So you want Teachers for your convention events; why not go talk to actual teachers?

That seems a kind of obvious answer, but it's easy to forget that there are people out there who spend their time educating others on the various things that your attendees want to hear about. There are all sorts of advantages to using a teacher as, well, a Teacher:

- They know how to teach. That's an important skill; not everybody has it. Even highly experienced people may not be able to communicate their knowledge.
- They likely have materials that they can use anyway; as noted earlier, there are your Keepers and Pluses.
- There's probably little that can surprise them if they're education professionals.
- They probably like teaching and will be enthusiastic about a chance to help.
- Some teachers also write, speak, and tutor on their own. They may welcome the chance to promote their other works and efforts.

There are many places to find teachers:

- Network with your staff and attendees. They've gone to school, gone to seminars, taken online courses, and probably know teachers who can speak and present at your convention.
- Your usual academic institutions: schools, colleges, etc. Local colleges and schools may be good, but also see if you're able to invite people from other institutions if they're noteworthy. Of course if you're fortunate, you live near a notable academic institution.

- Training companies. There are any number of companies that provide professional trainers. These people also have an advantage that they may have a different perspective than those working at academic institutions.
- People that produce and make training tools or use them to teach. They may also be able to bring a lot of useful training materials.

Approaching teachers is quite easy. You usually find them via their institution or business, or via networking, which makes getting contact information pretty simple.

There are a few limitations and challenges to take into account:

- Depending on their employer/institution the teachers may have certain legal and professional limitations.
- Depending on their Subject and audience people may be more or less interested - some people want to hear from teachers, some want to avoid them on vacation.
- They may have specific ways of doing things they've developed. You want to make sure that fits your goals.

Those challenges aside, try getting academics and teachers for your convention. You'll have a pretty good idea of what you're going to get.

Attendees

Your convention has all sorts of people coming there for fun, education, vacation, or the need to get away from work. Among these diverse individuals there are doubtlessly people that can speak on career and professional issues. Why not use them (and give them a membership discount)?

Everyone who attends your convention that has a job, career, degree, business, or something associated with your conventions themes is a potential Teacher for your events. Best of all, the attendees are people who are very likely to know what people at the convention want, and they may be able to rally friends and contacts to provide even more Teachers.

Consider some of the possibilities:

- Your science fiction convention has many attendees who have done small press or short-story publishing. Those are people who can provide a direct, visceral perspective on starting out.
- Your anime convention has a cosplay group in attendance, which has members who do costuming/clothing-making full or part time. They can speak on small businesses and, of course, cosplay.
- Your collectibles convention attracts people who have written books on the collectables market you serve - an excellent source of people to speak on the Subject of writing and any other Subjects at the convention.

If you're going to involve attendees, keep a few things in mind:

- Reimburse them for their time - membership discount, cheaper dealer's room tables, etc.

- Never count out the value of recognition in reimbursement - if an attendee does a number of professional events, mention them on your website or convention guidebook. You've just given them something to show to a client or on a job interview.
- Attendees who do events are excellent recruits to help run the convention as a whole.

It's as simple as putting a post on your convention blog or message board, so why not give it a try?

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON THIS SAMPLE: The full “Teacher” section contains a huge list of potential resources and advice on how to use them and rally them.

The rest of the book goes through Approaches, Subjects, Keepers, and Pluses with just as much detail – and has a large list of suggestions and professional association resources.

So if you like what you see, drop on by the website and get yourself a copy of “Convention Career Connection”

<http://www.conventioncareerconnection.com/>