

Speed-Dating Q&A: What Suppliers Need to Know

Q: What is speed-dating?

A: Speed-dating is a one-on-one discussion between a supplier and a representative from a Commercial Building Energy Alliance (CBEA) member organization. The purpose of the discussion is to allow commercial building owners and operators to communicate their energy-efficiency needs to equipment suppliers on a personal level. In turn, suppliers are encouraged to share with CBEA members any emerging technologies they may have developed, as well as how the product may benefit the commercial building sector as a whole, in terms of breaking down the barriers that prevent companies from using cost-effective, innovative strategies.

Q: How many CBEA members can I usually meet with at the supplier summit?

A: Each supplier may potentially meet (one at a time) with five to seven CBEA members, depending on the number of suppliers and CBEA members in attendance at the summit.

Q: How long does each “date” last?

A: Each date lasts five minutes, with two minutes provided as “transition” time between dates. There will be a reminder bell at each four-minute interval.

Q: What kinds of materials can I bring to share with CBEA members?

A: It is recommended that you bring business cards, product samples, brochures, note-taking accessories, a laptop, etc.

Q: Will there be booth space at the summit where my company can set up a display?

A: No. Suppliers are not permitted to set up displays but are encouraged to bring product samples and pamphlets in their suitcases and wallets.

Q: Do I get to choose which CBEA members I meet with?

A: Yes, you get to list your top five choices on a form that will be sent to you. You are then placed within the dating sessions on a first-come, first-served basis. For those CBEA members who have all their sessions filled, a waiting list will be created. (It is for this reason that we ask that you let us know at your earliest convenience if you will be unable to attend the summit or participate in speed-dating.)

Q: Do CBEA members get to choose which suppliers they want to meet with?

A: No. They are happy to meet with whoever selects them.

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Q: How long in advance does sign-up for speed-dating begin?

A: Sign-up generally begins two to three weeks in advance of the summit, when your form will be sent to you. You will be sent an email and the “Dating Requests” form by email when sign-up has begun if you have registered to attend the summit.

Q: Besides speed-dating, will there be more opportunities to continue my discussion with CBEA members?

A: Yes. A reception follows the speed-dating session, which is another opportunity to network. The exchange of business cards is also encouraged if there is a mutual interest from both parties.

Q: May I contact CBEA members after the summit to follow up with our conversation?

A: After the summit, each supplier receives a link to fill out a questionnaire regarding the summit. When this is completed, you will be emailed a contact list that contains information from those members who do not mind being contacted. Also, as previously stated, if you and a CBEA member shared a mutual interest and exchanged cards, then by all means, feel free to follow up.

Q: What can I do to prepare for speed-dating ahead of time?

A: Study and know your product well enough to conduct a full conversation and be prepared to answer any questions the CBEA member may have. Pay attention during the morning and afternoon sessions so you have an idea of what the CBEA members are looking for in an energy-efficient product or service. These are smart people who work with DOE and the national laboratories on a regular basis and can tell if you are insufficiently prepared.

Q: If a CBEA member has a no-show, or an empty session, during speed-dating, can I meet with him or her during that time?

A: We make every effort to fill empty slots and replace no-shows. The best action you can take is to contact the on-site speed-dating coordinator to see if we can insert you into the session. For this reason, we ask that you let us know if you have to leave or will not be able to make any of your dates.

Q: When will I know who my dates will be? When will the schedule be finalized?

A: The schedule is literally not finalized until speed-dating begins. We try to fill empty slots and replace no-shows as best we can, which is a continual process.