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presentation, and you can do so feeling more like a student in a class than someone who's worried about whether or not you'll be able to keep your credit card in your pocket.

Gail Perry • Sep. 08, 2015



I recently attended the Midwest Accounting & Finance Showcase, an annual two-day CPE conference hosted by the Illinois CPA Society, of which I used to be a proud member until I relocated to Indiana, and Flagg Management, the organization that manages several of the large accounting events each year.

One of my jobs at that event was to lead the technology walking tours. If you're at a

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stuff on their booth tables – free things that we really want to take home with us. So how do we learn a little bit about the product or service, get our hands on the tempting giveaway, and avoid listening to the sales pitch from the person at the booth who asks too many nosy questions and stands in the way of us getting the free stuff at the next booth?

Instead of waiting until there's a small group in front of the booth that interests you, ideally hoping the salesperson is engaged in conversation with someone else, stepping into the group, reaching in for a brochure and that shiny free item, and making your getaway, there's a better way to experience the exhibit hall floor.

On a walking tour, you visit the booths of a group of pre-selected vendors, and listen to a brief presentation in a relaxed setting. There is a difference from the drive-by experience that you would get on your own. First, the vendor isn't under any pressure to grab your attention in five seconds and keep you from walking away. You are a captive audience, and the presenter knows that, so the presentation can be more heartfelt, real-life experiences can be shared.

Often you will have an opportunity to ask questions during a walking tour presentation, and you can do so feeling more like a student in a class than someone who's worried about whether or not you'll be able to keep your credit card in your pocket.

In the time that a walking tour presentation is being made, a brief rapport is built, forging the way for you to feel comfortable returning to the booth later. "I heard your presentation," you can say, and the vendor will immediately know that the sales pitch can be skipped and you're here for some real answers.

You get CPE credit for your time spent on the tour. And, you still get to take the free gizmo without even having to feel guilty about doing so. You might even find that the

best free stuff is in the presentation itself.

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