

ASIS International 60th Annual Seminar Atlanta 2014

By Rachael Saunders (Secretary - ASIS Victoria Australia Chapter)

I attended the ASIS International annual seminar in Atlanta from 29 September to 2 October 2014. It is a gathering of over 20,000 security professionals from around the world. There are numerous high quality guest speakers, 100's of exhibits and networking sessions.

Throughout the conference there are so many educational sessions that you can attend in many different streams. The difficulty is in choosing which ones to attend! Apart from the conference sessions there are pre seminar programs that usually last for a full day on a specific topic and other focused sessions in the exhibit hall.

There are also pre seminar programs that you can attend that are generally a full days training on a specific topic.

The guest speakers were all of such a high standard. My favourite was General Colin Powell (Retired). Colin Powell discussed the need for balance in security by keeping people safe and letting people go about their business. Security shouldn't hinder people.

Our Chapter each year is provided with a complimentary ticket for one of our members to attend the seminar. This year I was the lucky recipient and I recommend next year for anyone interested in attending the seminar to apply to the Chapter for the ticket. The seminar next year is in Anaheim, USA which of course, happens to be the home of Disneyland. If you have kids there is added incentive to go!

My seminar tips

My no. 1 tip is wear comfortable shoes. The exhibit hall takes days to get through and has 100's of exhibitors and thousands of products so you will be doing a lot of walking.

Plan the educational sessions you want to attend. These are posted on the ASIS International website well before the event so you can plan accordingly. There are so many parallel sessions that it is best to know what you want to attend and what room it is being held in prior to the seminar starting. Leave some space to attend an educational session in an area that you would not normally have time to learn about. It will broaden your expertise and you will meet security experts that you may not normally mix with.

Make the most of the networking sessions. There are lunches each day and functions each night. The sharing of knowledge with colleagues is invaluable and over my years of attending I have made contacts throughout the world.

Along with networking if there are certain suppliers or colleagues that you want to spend some time with it is worth asking them if they will be arriving in town earlier. That way you are able to spend time with them before the seminar when it is a bit quieter. I set up meetings in the days prior to the seminar and it helped to be able to catch up for lunch or drinks rather than a rushed meeting during the seminar. I had lunch with a representative of one company that I had been in discussion with for about two years. We were able to progress an alliance that would have been much harder to discuss fully over the phone.

Recommendation

Attend – you won't be sorry!