THE 7 MUST-DO’S AT INTA

(Clue: It’s all about the people – including you)

They say that it’s easier to give advice than to take it; especially your own advice! That may be true, but in this case it’s only because I won’t be able to be at INTA this year that I have been thinking about what I’ll be missing.

**What this is not**: this piece is not about behavior at INTA, remembering business cards, where to stay, how to schedule and so on. We all receive tips on how to conduct business meetings, networking and so on. This is not about that.

**What this is**: as INTA is about people – human beings – fellow citizens of the earth – (you get the idea) more than anything else (yes, including IP and networking) this piece is more about how to maximize the very short opportunity to visit a special place and meet amazing people that you probably wouldn’t otherwise meet. This may be a once in a lifetime opportunity, and one whose memory and influence will continue long after most business conversations will have been forgotten.

So what are these must-dos?

1. **Do notice the countryside and local flavor.**

Take note of the scenery on the way from the airport to the city. In Seattle, you get to drive through the local rain forest. Look outside and enjoy it. It’s exhilarating!

When you’re in the city, make sure you have time to walk. Seattle is a beautiful walking city, and has a great walking climate in the spring. So go outside and enjoy it!

1. **Arrive early or leave late.**

Once you see the city and countryside, you’ll almost certainly want to see more of it. Whether it’s taking a trip up Mount Rainier, a sea plane trip to one of the islands, or the so-called Underground Tour of Seattle, something will grab you. Either go a few days early or stay on for a few days. You’ll thank me afterwards!

1. **Stand out in the crowd.**

At last year’s INTA meeting in Barcelona, there were several people wearing the traditional Arab galabia (I know it has various spellings in English); there was at least one fellow wearing lederhosen; and several people were wearing the Jewish kipah (yarmulke). I feel that this demonstrates a very positive form of multiculturalism and it allows people that aren’t dressed in the generally accepted business ‘uniform’ to express their cultural/religious/national identity while certainly retaining the required formality. It also helps you to be spotted in a crowd, which is always useful!

1. **Speak to people that you normally wouldn’t speak to (religion, politics).**

How often will you speak to someone dressed differently to you?

I wear my kipa (Jewish head covering). It is clearly visible. That did not prevent several conversations with a lady from Iran (we discussed the nuclear issue several years ago); several gentlemen from Saudi Arabia; an attorney from Jordan; and several young attorneys working in Qatar, originating from both banks of the Jordan River. I also had a fascinating conversation with an attorney from Indonesia on the similarities between ‘Halal’ and ‘Kosher’. If we ***only*** spoke to people who looked the same as us, what a dull and, dare I say it, even more fractured world we would have!

1. **Find ways to complement people**

Not everything is about culture and religion. I recall a lawyer from the US, whose business card was unique, having a bright illustration of what resembled a blue feather on it. I connected though complementing that design, as one of the most eye catching and attractive designs I have seen on a business card.

Then there was a conversation that I had with a trademark attorney from Australia. I recalled my travels to Australia, and we eventually started discussing the countryside, and the reality of living in the country and raising animals, while working in the City in a law firm.

And then there was the account of a Turkish lawyer and the story of the amazing hospitality that he experienced during his trip to Israel; as told by his daughter who has recently started an all-female law firm in Turkey.

1. **Human connections**

It’s all about connecting with other human beings. A major upside of the digital revolution is our ability to be in contact with people on the other side of the Globe, instantly! Other cultures may be different, but they don’t have to be foreign and strange. We all have to get along. We’re all responsible for maintaining the well-being of this planet and solving problems, and for enriching society the World over. I have opened a WeChat account, and can communicate instantly with some of my friends in China. Even if we can’t see some our friends from different parts of the world very often, we can at least be in touch once in a while!

The human connections that we make at INTA will have a positive impact years from now. ***This*** is the real success of the INTA meeting.

1. **Balance your time**

Just a word of caution. Don’t overdo it. Select your activities carefully.

Over the years (since my first INTA in 1998) I realized that certain activities work better for me; others less so, and can even be counter-productive.

Sleep, family, nutrition and exercise are my priorities. Do what works for you.

Unfortunately, I won’t be joining you in implementing any of the above ‘must-do’s’ at this year’s meeting in Seattle. But do I wish you an enjoyable and successful time there and look forward to seeing you next year in Boston, where we can do it all over again!