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# trekking

a newsletter on practical strategic thinking and action  
issue #53: event prep for better roi

## Event Prep for Better ROI

One of our coaching clients, Barbara, is the CEO of a service/knowledge business that provides outsourced help desk support for desktop computers. Many of her company's clients are IT firms that manage other companies' computer infrastructure but don't want to handle the mundane issues related to desktops. She has a staffing and business process model that enables her to make a profit at this annoying, low-end work.

Barbara gets more ROI out of participating in trade shows than anyone we know. She pre-screens the attendance list and sets goals for the people she wants to meet. She makes a point of wearing a brightly-colored blazer. Although she is often invited to lead breakout sessions, she also makes a point of asking questions at the large general sessions. She always opens by introducing herself at the microphone as "the Help Desk Lady" before asking her well-prepared question.

Inevitably, two or three prospective clients seek her out (she's easy to find in her bright blazer), to learn more about her services. These conversations are already several levels above the blind self-introductions many of us make in large groups. Her clear introduction, distinctive looks and good questions have set her apart. When combined with her pre-screened list of targets to meet at the conference, she generally hits her 5x ROI on her time and trip's cost.

## strategic thinking perspective

OK, so the blazer might not be the right answer for everyone (especially our male readers...unless you've won the Masters). But we all need to differentiate ourselves. Think about what makes you different. How can you make this tangible to people you meet? Try to use tools beyond just your words. Can you hand out something different from the typical business card? Can you send a follow-up that will engage the people you meet? Can you ask good questions of others so they remember you as an interesting person and not just someone who speaks only about themselves?

-Mary Adams ([adams@trekconsulting.com](mailto:adams@trekconsulting.com))

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## strategic action perspective

The other part of Barbara's strategy that is so compelling is her pre-conference preparation. She has a list of people she wants to meet. She's thought through possible questions that will be memorable to the general session. She's ready with questions relevant to the different kinds of people that she will meet one on one. She's mastered that most basic question of value to any stranger you meet at a networking event: "So what interests you in today's program?"

In good times, the rising tide floats a lot of boats. In rough times, you have to work smarter to achieve your goals. Better prep for an event can open good doors.

- *Michael Oleksak (oleksak@trekconsulting.com)*

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## reading list

*The Post-American World*

By Fareed Zakaria

The title of this book has been a turn-off for a lot of people. But the title does not fully represent Zakaria's thesis. He feels that the story of the last couple decades is not about the decline of the U.S. but, rather, the "rise of the rest" as education and economic growth have increased the standard of living in so many corners of the globe. It would be a mistake, he tells us, for the U.S. to see this as a negative. It is a great thing that the world has more consumers and more brainpower.

The U.S. still has a pre-eminent position in this world, at least economically. Although so much economic activity has moved offshore, we still capture a huge amount of the value. Think about the iPod. Although it is manufactured offshore, Apple captures the lion's share of its value. We also dominate in nano- and bio-technology—two of the most cutting edge industries.

Politically, he has some advice for the U.S.—focus less on force and more on moral leadership. His point is that our greatest strength has always been our legitimacy and that "diplomatic imperialism is a luxury that the U.S. can no longer afford."

As we move into the thick of our presidential race, this is a great book to give you perspective on where we are, how we got here, and how much we can still accomplish—a much more positive message than the title implies.



## announcements

On Thursday October 2nd, at Babson College in Wellesley, The Exit Planning Exchange (XPX) will present guest speaker Arthur Maxwell, Founder, President and Chairman of Affordable Interior Systems, Inc. He will be talking about "The Growth, Sale, Purchase, & Resale of a Company and the Experiences of Working with the Advisors That Made it Happen." Contact Cheryl Warren-Powers of XPX at 508-440-4104 or [cheryl@exitplanningexchange.com](mailto:cheryl@exitplanningexchange.com) for additional information and registration.

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## about trek consulting

Trek Consulting helps service and technology companies achieve and sustain growth.

We work with CEOs and senior management teams to develop and execute profitable sustainable growth strategies and tactics. Our work focuses on developing, managing and marketing intellectual capital, the core asset of today's organizations.

Our clients report improved market focus, greater revenues, better margins and increased profits. To learn more about Trek Consulting and how we can help you improve your company's results, visit us on the web at [www.trekconsulting.com](http://www.trekconsulting.com) or call us at 781.729.1008.