

Professional Growth Playbook

Prepare. Connect. Follow through.

A practical, field-tested system designed to help defense financial professionals maximize their Defense Financial Management Institute (DFMI) experience and apply it to their work, network, and professional development.

1. Prepare with Purpose

Define what success looks like for you.

- Set 1–2 goals and review sessions that best support them. (e.g., "talk to 5 practitioners in my domain").
- Draft a 20-second personal introduction (i.e. role, interest, what you're exploring at DFMI).
- Bookmark priority sessions aligned to goals; start with one per time block to avoid decision fatigue.



2. Navigate the Event Strategically

Take notes, ask questions, and participate actively.

- Morning:** attend your starred session; ask one question that connects your work to the topic.
- Midday:** visit two booths tied to your goals; log one actionable takeaway from each.
- Afternoon:** reconnect with one person you met earlier; set a follow-up.



3. Networking the Smart Way

Approach speakers, visit exhibitor booths, and connect with peers. Spark meaningful conversations and build relationships that last beyond the event.

- Opening:** "Hi, I'm <name>. I'm focused on <topic>. What's one lesson you've seen work well in the field?"
- Speaker approach:** Reference a specific slide/point, then connect to your work; ask for one recommendation.
- Close with clarity:** Swap contact details + agree on a next step ("I'll share notes on X by Friday").



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4. Find Your Networking Edge

Differentiate yourself by acting on opportunities others overlook, ask bold questions, offer insights, or volunteer for micro-roles in discussions. Leaders notice proactive contributors.

- Choose a seat at lunch at a table with people you don't know.
- Volunteer for a visible micro-role (session questions, note-taker for recap, chapter-specific inquiry).
- Cluster with cross-functional peers (finance, data, ops) to spot overlooked collaborations.
- Turn hallway conversations into calendar holds (15-minute debriefs week after event).



5. Follow Through After the Event

Send follow-ups within 48 hours, summarize your learnings, and keep your new connections warm. The event may end, but your momentum should continue.

- 48 hours: send short thank-you with a useful link or note.
- 2 weeks: share a 5-bullet summary with your manager; propose one application at work.
- 8 weeks: reconnect with 3 contacts; share progress or a question.



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