

# Top Tips for getting the most from your visit to NRF's Big Show

**To find out more or request a demo  
please contact us on:**

Island Pacific USA	+1 800 994 3847
Island Pacific UK	+44 1 279 874545
Island Pacific AU	+61 2 9369 8500
Island Pacific NZ	+64 9 980 4595
Island Pacific India	+91 44 2254 0109

E-mail: [info@islandpacific.com](mailto:info@islandpacific.com)  
Website: [www.islandpacific.com](http://www.islandpacific.com)

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## Introduction

Going to NRF's Big Show can be exciting and wondrous. However, when sitting on the plane home, often we wonder what it was we really learned and if we got out of it what we put into it. When walking into the hall and looking at the sea of vendors waiting to explain their product, it is apparent that there is more available than can possibly be experienced. That is why having a strategy from the beginning is essential. It will make a return on investment possible and will assure the ability to leverage the content and resources available during the three days of NRF's Big Show in the months following!





# Time Management and Task Focus

When attending the Big Show, value realization is broken into two components:

- ▼ Time management
- ▼ Task Focus

**Time management** ensures all critical activities are scheduled.

**Task focus** is essential as there are so many opportunities. Trying to do a little of everything will generally yield the lowest value. Instead, focus on learning, strategy development or networking and spend your time accordingly.

Regardless of your goal in attending the Big Show, this simple approach will help you get the most value from your time in New York.

## Time Management and Task Focus:

- ▼ Arrive early and stay longer
- ▼ Schedule meetings ahead of time
- ▼ Arrange meal and coffee meetings
- ▼ Review the map of the hall
- ▼ Plan your day
- ▼ Attend presentations and courses
- ▼ Take notes / keep a journal
- ▼ Schedule time for spontaneity
- ▼ Meet with existing partners/providers
- ▼ Common sense tips



1. Arrive early (Saturday) and stay longer (through the following week): Come early and stay late - three days isn't enough. You can start to coordinate with other partners, vendors, and peers who are also arriving early or staying the full week to coordinate outside meetings and gatherings to gain additional contacts, resources, and value. Often meetings are possible Saturday night through the following Friday if not beyond. These meetings need to be scheduled early and followed up with the two weeks prior.
2. Get your meetings scheduled early: The break out vendor meetings fill up fast, and it is a great time to meet one-on-one with leading experts in the field. You just need to get on their calendar. Identify the initiatives you wish to pursue during the coming year, then identify the top three partners and vendors in the space, and meet with them to learn best practice and emerging capabilities one on one. They will of course hound you after the Big Show, but it is a small price to pay for access and information on things specific to your emerging business strategies and supporting efforts.
3. Try not to eat alone: If you are with a group, use the meals to divide and conquer and to catch up on the highlights of the previous period. Better yet, schedule meal meetings with important contacts. Scheduling coffee breaks or meeting up in the American Express lounge (assuming you have access and there is room) offer a nice break from the sea of people and continuous noise. Having a meal or coffee meeting helps pack more into the day. Generally, the big vendor meetings offer great food and wonderful mixing opportunities, attend with a purpose and ensure you make new contacts as well as touch base with existing relationships. This is a wonderful venue to catch up with people over great food in a relaxed atmosphere.
4. Map your daily sojourn(s) to the floor: While it's possible to get value wandering up and down the aisles, it is better to identify target vendor booths and plan your walk to and from them on a daily basis. Many find it best to schedule two trips to the floor per day, but keep each trip to a few aisles with a specific target along the way. This allows for both targeted meaningful research as well as the opportunity for discovery of something new and previously unknown.
5. Plan your day: Make sure that you break the day up for everything you want to attend. You need to make sure you have the daily agenda planned with where you need to be, and when, down to the half hour if not more granular.
6. Do not forget the key note presentations and the courses: The best and brightest in the business present at this show. Classes and breakout sessions have the potential to yield the greatest value as one can experience concentrated delivery by people who have the battle scars and insights earned from experience. It is the best source of high value retail specific content you are likely to find in 2017.
7. Take notes / keep a journal: Every stop you make, jot down key observations, the best and worst thing noted, and the name of the contact there (this helps you find the right business card). Two weeks after the event, you won't remember who said what and it's easy to misplace some of the key learnings. Make sure to have an asterisk or some marker for those you definitely want to follow up with after the show. Leverage tablet and camera/mobile technology to minimize the amount of paper being lugged around and shipped back to the office.





8. Schedule time for spontaneity/unscheduled events: Someone is going to mention something, or there will be a surprise visit that has to happen, or there is a thing on the floor that everyone is talking about. Make sure that you have an hour every day to go on the floor, schedule an ad-hoc meeting, or sit and review notes and schedule follow ups. Having some quiet time every day helps stave off battle fatigue as this is definitely a “drinking from the firehose” type of event.

9. Don't forget your strategic partners/existing providers: If you have software you are already running or partners you already depend on, make sure you spend some time at their display and talk to their people. This is a great time to get a view into the marketing presentations and road maps, and discover or re-familiarize yourself with the tools already offered by existing partners potentially in your arsenal for driving the most value from existing solutions. It is a good idea to find their best and brightest architect type and sit with them to discuss your own opportunities and success stories as it may spawn a number of great benefits.

10. Personal and common sense tips: Don't forget the normal points of any conference!

- a. Get your badge early (Saturday or at an offsite location to avoid the lines).
- b. Keep hydrated, it is deceptive how much water we need.
- c. Eat well / healthy to help minimize the chance of getting sick.
- d. Don't queue up in lines for cabs / Uber... a two to three block walk will pay huge dividends.
- e. Use the Subway during peak traffic times. It's much faster than dealing with traffic to get anywhere.
- f. It always takes longer to get “there” than you think it will, so plan accordingly.
- g. Have a tablet, use it for note taking to make sure you have access later.
- h. Carry as little as possible. All vendors will email things to you, and there is also a shipping kiosk in the convention center. However, make sure you only collect printed material you really want or need. Most will never refer back to printed material picked up. So if you are like most, rather than carrying things, capture data digitally, have things shipped, save your back, and do a small part to save the planet by minimizing the paper picked up.





# Benefits of Attendance

Following the above strategies will help you maximize your time at NRF's Big Show. Beyond those, it is also beneficial to make sure you know why you are going to the Big Show. There are a myriad of reasons to go, but the most common ones are as follows:

## Benefits of Attendance:

- ▼ Learn retail
- ▼ Learn new technology or concepts
- ▼ Validate strategy
- ▼ Plan a key initiative
- ▼ Find new opportunities
- ▼ Find new talent

- 1. Learn retail:** NRF's Big Show is a great place for retail neophytes to get introduced to the technology, vernacular, and world of retail. It is a wonderful way to catch up on concepts and processes, learn about key technology players, and interact with retailers who do retail well.
- 2. Learn new technology or concepts:** This is a fantastic opportunity to accelerate your learning with hands on booths and courses. You have the ability to pick the top players in a given space and interact with their solutions, watch demos, and talk with the experts to learn about customization, configuration, and user experience associated with the solution in question. There is no better place to conduct evaluations in a back-to-back manner where in a single day one can conduct hands on reviews of multiple technologies without bringing them onsite.





- 3. Validate strategy:** Often business leaders find themselves too heads down in day-to-day business management to keep abreast of the latest thinking in the space. This is a perfect place to unplug from the daily grind and learn what the leading thinkers in the space are thinking. This is a perfect medium to meet with those resources and re-think the current strategy with an eye to what the most current thinking is. Likely it will be the seed of the next effort to enhance profit and revenue!
- 4. Plan a key initiative:** Whether it is new POS, Merchandizing, Planning, Order management or e-commerce, the best are represented at NRF's Big Show and it is the perfect time to visit with them all. Technologists and strategists are available at each booth to talk about why their solution will catapult delivery to new heights. Wandering the aisles of the Big Show allows one to touch and feel the technology, visit with customers, hear success (and less successful) stories, and get a feel for potential partners for working on initiatives. This is the place to review the technology that will enable the future of retail!

- 5. Find new opportunities:** Whether searching for a new job or a new business venture, there are leaders at NRF's Big Show. There is no other place to find such a concentration of retail leaders in one place and paying attention. This is the place to validate ideas, help others, and identify opportunities to grow business or make a change. The networking opportunities are unparalleled.
- 6. Find new talent:** NRF's Big Show is a wonderful venue for meeting professionals in the retail space, some of whom may be looking for the next opportunity. As you are looking into the new year and new budgets, often upgrading the team is an exhausting and challenging task facing business leaders. The Big Show is a great venue for meeting with prospective future employees. Not only are there a number of great individuals who are in the market, you may identify those not in the market, and who can be recruited away once it is determined they are a likely fit in your organization.





## Conclusion

Regardless of the rationale to attend NRF's Big Show, there is no question that the resources needed to lay the foundation for any retail strategy are in those classrooms, key notes, and aisles of vendors. The challenge is to ferret the information out through exploration and targeted hunting through those same venues. Developing clarity on possibilities, methods, and approaches for a project, developing strategic direction, and seeking validation on the current thinking and best practice are all offered in New York during this three-day extravaganza.

Target your participation in a subsection of the over 300 speakers, 55 breakout sessions, and 11 key note sessions and wander the aisles of the sea of vendors... with so many options, leveraging the above strategies will help ensure a visit to NRF's Big Show returns high organizational value.





# Sample Itinerary

Daily Schedule for NRF's Big Show – 2017

Time	Activity	Contact
0730	Breakfast meeting with Vendor	
0830	NRF Key Note	
0930		
1030		
1130		
1230		
130		
230		
330		
430		
530		
630		
730		
830		





# Sample Journal

Vendor Notes:

<b>Vendor/Partner met with:</b>						
<b>Contact Name(s):</b>						
<b>Best thing:</b>						
<b>Key Take Away:</b>						
<b>Follow Up:</b>						
<b>Code:</b>	<b>Follow Up:</b>		<b>Research:</b>		<b>N/A:</b>	





## About Mainsail Strategic Consulting

Mainsail Strategic Consulting is an independent management consulting firm specializing in advising retailers and wholesalers on technology and business transformation issues. Our consulting team prides ourselves in delivering exceptional resources to help you navigate change.

We are built with a unique professional profile - the firm is managed by industry-recognized leaders, our Principals are directly involved with all client deliverables, and we recruit only experienced professionals.

We specialize in the strategy, selection and deployment of supply chain, merchandising, e-Commerce and business analytics solutions.

We have no exclusive partnerships or alliances with software or hardware providers and have a history of serving acknowledged industry leaders, such as Avon Products, Chanel, Brooks Brothers, Genesco and Spencer Gifts.

To contact Mainsail about how we might be of service, contact the firm's principals or go to:  
<http://mainsailplus.com>

Kris Torgerson  
208-861-6776  
[ktorgerson@mainsailplus.com](mailto:ktorgerson@mainsailplus.com)

Dimitry Erez  
941-400-2170  
[derez@mainsailplus.com](mailto:derez@mainsailplus.com)

## About Island Pacific

Island Pacific is a global leader in retail merchandising and store operations software solutions. For 30 years, Island Pacific has been a thought leader in retail software solutions, and has developed a reputation for delivering high-quality, high-reliability software to the retail industry. As a result, Island Pacific is a leading resource for scalable, flexible and affordable solutions for retailers around the world.

Island Pacific, a division of 3Q Holdings Limited ([www.threeq.com.au](http://www.threeq.com.au)) was founded in 1978. The company is headquartered in Santa Ana, California, and has offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.



# Island Pacific SmartSuite

## Overview

Island Pacific SmartSuite is a software solution specifically designed to help the retail industry streamline their merchandising and store operations. With multiple distribution channels and ever more demanding consumers, building strong, long lasting relationships with both businesses and individual customers can place tremendous pressure on your business, your IT infrastructure and your personnel.

Island Pacific SmartSuite provides an end-to-end solution that covers the full scope of retail management: from planning, purchasing and distribution, to replenishment, point of sale and much, much more. To improve customer satisfaction and the efficiency of your business, the Island Pacific SmartSuite solution has been carefully crafted with continuous improvement in mind. You can choose which modules best suit your operations. In this way, Island Pacific SmartSuite provides a robust and feature-rich product that can be continually upgraded to match the fast pace of change in the retail environment.

Whatever your aim to expand locally or globally, to add more channels or manage your existing ones effectively or to focus on your customers regardless of channel ensuring right stock, right place, right time – Island Pacific will ensure the Island Pacific SmartSuite solution is deployed effectively and aligns with your business strategy, so you can achieve all this and more. For a demo, or to find out exactly how this pioneering, end-to-end solution could benefit your business, contact us today.

## Benefits

- ▼ **Used by the world's leading brands**
- ▼ **Island Pacific knows retail and will work with you to determine which solution best fits your needs**
- ▼ **Choose an end to end or modular solution which can work with your existing infrastructure**
- ▼ **Streamline operations:** Manage and plan business operations across all channels, using a single end-to-end solution
- ▼ **Best practice:** Island Pacific SmartSuite uses tried and tested processes for global retail management
- ▼ **Support growth:** Build firm foundations for future expansion
- ▼ **Align your business culture with the consumer's growing expectation for technical innovation**

## Features

- ▼ **Multi-channel:** Manage retail, wholesale and e-commerce operations on one system
- ▼ **Versatile:** Select the modules that best meet your needs
- ▼ **Provides an end to end solution for today's fast growing global retailers**
- ▼ **Cross-module integration ensuring Data integrity**
- ▼ **Available On Premise or Private Cloud**
- ▼ **One view of customer and stock in a real time environment allowing retailers to exceed customers expectations**

