



THE **IMEX** SURVIVAL GUIDE:

How I Move Through IMEX with Energy, Clarity and Intention



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Encore partnered with industry expert Meg Sytnick to share her practical guidance as a planner, hosted buyer and intermediary when navigating IMEX.

Let's start here:

After more than two decades working across travel, meetings and event experiences, I've learned that the most valuable industry opportunities are often the most layered. As a planner, strategist and hosted buyer, I've navigated IMEX from multiple perspectives, balancing business goals, supplier relationships, education, networking and the very real need to move through it all with intention.

I'm now applying these same principles in a new way as I help shape an international hosted buyer experience. It has reinforced something I learned quickly: IMEX is not just about showing up. It's about learning how to move through it well.

IMEX is one of the most dynamic environments in our industry. The opportunity is real, the access is meaningful, and the pace can be frenetic. With appointments, education sessions, show-floor activations and conversations happening between it all, there's a lot coming at you, all at once.

Over time, I've learned that IMEX isn't about doing everything. It's about being intentional with where you place your time, energy, and attention.

I created this guide because approaching IMEX with clarity, self-awareness, and purpose can make it more productive and genuinely meaningful. This is how I move through it and make it work for me.

1.

I start with intention before I open my calendar

Before I book anything, I pause to get clear on why I'm at IMEX that year. I don't think about it in broad terms. I get specific about:

- What needs my attention right now
- Which conversations matter
- What I already have in motion

Once the calendar starts filling, it fills quickly. Depending on how you're attending, some of that structure may already be there:

- Hosted buyers have required, scheduled appointments.
- Other attendees have more flexibility, but more decisions to make

Either way, the environment will pull on your time. Clarity makes it easier to decide what belongs on the calendar and guides how I shape experiences for others. Every appointment or activity should support the buyer's purpose, not simply add more to the day.

A thought to keep in mind:

When you know what matters, it becomes easier to say yes. It becomes just as easy to say no.

2.

I build a calendar that feels sustainable

IMEX is not just meetings. You're also navigating:

- Education sessions
- On-floor activations
- Social moments
- Unexpected conversations that turn into something valuable

All of this adds up. Hosted buyers also have the rhythm of required appointments. Six to eight appointments a day may not sound like much, but each one requires focus. It's a full day.

So, when I build my calendar or shape the broader experience around the individual schedules of the buyers I support, I look at the full picture. I don't try to fill every spare moment. To maintain balance, I hold space for:

- Time to reset
- Time to eat
- Time to step away, even briefly

This isn't accomplished with rigidity; it's the intentionality that helps me stay focused and energized. After all, what seems manageable at 9:00 AM can feel very different by 3:00 PM.

A helpful reminder:

It's not about how full your calendar is. It's about how it feels to move through it.

3.

I think about movement as much as meetings

This is something that's easy to underappreciate until you're in it: The location of your meetings matters. It's something I consider when planning my own day and when shaping the broader experience for the buyers I support. Before I confirm anything, I look at the flow:

- Where are these partners on the floor
- Does this meeting sequence make sense?
- Am I moving with ease, or constantly backtracking?

To meet the physical demands of IMEX, it's essential to create more efficiency in how the day unfolds. Your energy doesn't just go into meetings. It also goes into moving through the space between them.

Use the IMEX footprint to your advantage so that your movement is paced for a marathon instead of a sprint.

On the floor:

A little self-awareness of your personal capacity can make the day far more manageable.

4.

I pay attention to my natural rhythm and energy flow

This one is simple, but it matters: How I feel throughout the day directly impacts how I show up for my own meetings and for the buyers I support. Since I know when I'm at my best, I try to plan around that. For me, that usually means:

- More focused conversations earlier in the day
- Lighter moments or listening later in the afternoon and evening
- Small resets to stay steady throughout

So, I pay attention. If my energy dips, I pause, even if it's just for a brief moment. Sometimes that means stepping off the floor, grabbing a quick bite

or simply taking a deep breath before the next conversation.

I also come prepared in small ways. Although food is available on the floor, it's not always there when you need it. Hydration also matters more than we give it credit for, especially after travel. I keep a few things on hand to help me:

- A snack I can eat quickly
- A reusable water bottle
- Electrolytes when I need a reset

It's nothing complicated, but I choose what supports me to be successful.

A note on rhythm:

When you work within your energy, everything flows better.

5.

I approach each meeting for what it is

Not every meeting at IMEX is the same. Some are:

- Tied to active business
- Part of a sourcing process
- A follow-up on something already in motion

Others are:

- Relationship-driven
- Quick touchpoints
- Moments to listen and learn

If I'm walking into a meeting tied to real business, I come prepared. That might mean submitting an RFP ahead of time or supplying context beforehand so we can use the time well. I apply that same standard when shaping a group interaction for buyers. It should have a clear purpose and respect everyone's time. Supplier partners are moving through back-to-back conversations all day. When both sides come prepared, the interaction becomes more focused, useful, and respectful.

A shared understanding:

Preparation on both sides makes every conversation better.

6.

I leave space for human moments

Not everything that matters at IMEX is scheduled. Some of the best moments are those that surprise you, like:

- A quick conversation
- Connecting with someone new
- A chance meeting that wasn't planned, but stays with you

When I have the space, I stay open to those moments. It's also why I avoid programming every open moment for the buyers I support. IMEX is about business, but it's also about people and the connections we make. Those moments can ground the entire experience in a different way.

Something I've noticed:

The conversations you didn't plan are often the ones you remember.

Closing Thoughts

IMEX will always be full: full of opportunity, full of energy, and full of things competing for your time. There's no perfect way to navigate it. But moving through it with intention and being thoughtful about your time, energy, and how you engage can change the entire experience.

That's what continues to make a difference for me, both in how I navigate IMEX and how I shape the experience for others.