

A SolidWorks World Survival Guide

by

John “Muggs” Ferguson

And a host of others

About this guide

The SolidWorks World Survival guide is the brainchild of John “Muggs” Ferguson, a three time SolidWorks World attendee. The information presented here is designed to help you navigate the subtle ins and outs of SolidWorks World from the perspective of the attendee. For the first timer, this guide will be invaluable as you make your way along with 4,500 or so other attendees. Even the seasoned SolidWorks World veteran will learn a few new techniques to make the most of the SolidWorks World experience.

About the author(s)

Muggs Ferguson is the principal of John Ferguson Design, a contract engineering firm based in Southampton, PA. A major player in the SolidWorks Community, Muggs is VP of the Mid-Atlantic SolidWorks User Group, a regular on several SolidWorks forums, and a top-notch SolidWorks user.

Other contributors to this guide include Southern US SWUGN representative Wayne Tiffany, and St. Croix Valley SolidWorks User Group leader Brian Lindahl. Thanks guys.

Forward (by Richard Doyle)

The SolidWorks World Survival Guide is a great illustration of the power of the SolidWorks Community. In my 11+ years of being involved with SolidWorks as a customer, user group leader, and more recently as an employee, I have witnessed countless examples of SolidWorks users going out of their way to help one another. From user groups to discussion forums, from regional events to blogs and podcasts, the willingness of SolidWorks users to add to the community experience is overwhelming. Thank you Muggs for your generosity and support. And thanks to all of the other SolidWorks users that contributed to this guide and regularly share their experience for the benefit of all.

A Note from the Author

Well, here I sit on a Saturday morning in San Diego, California. It's a beautiful site. I'm overlooking the marina on the back side of the San Diego Convention Center, the wind is blowing slightly and there's not a cloud in the sky.

This is my third SolidWorks World conference. I attended in Orlando in 2005, New Orleans in 2007, and now here in San Diego in 2008. Although I don't consider myself to be an expert, I have learned a few things in past trips that I thought might help you conquer the SolidWorks World monster. Most of these suggestions are little more than common sense, but represent things that I didn't know when I attended my first conference. I hope what I have to share will make your experience better and more enjoyable.

John “Muggs” Ferguson

Before You Go

Congratulations! You've registered for the conference, paid your fee, and hopefully are getting excited about the opportunity to attend. Still, you're not quite ready to go. Here are a few things you should get prepared even before you even make your travel plans.

- **Consider arriving early**
 - SolidWorks World kicks off on a Sunday, but arriving the day before will allow you to get "the lay of the land". Finding out how long it takes to walk from your room (or offsite hotel) to the convention center, where the general session rooms are, and most importantly, where breakfast and lunch will be served will allow you more time to concentrate on more important stuff when the conference actually starts.
- **Plan your sessions ahead of time**
 - When you registered on the SolidWorks World website, you were given the opportunity to select the sessions you are interested in attending. If you're the only SolidWorks user from your company that will be attending, consider sessions that might benefit the company as a whole. You can report on these sessions when you return to the office.
 - *Remember, pre-selecting sessions doesn't guarantee you a seat in the breakout room. SolidWorks uses this information to plan for room size and whether a particular session may need to be repeated. You will still need to arrive on time and claim your spot. Hands-on sessions are the only sessions that require preregistration.*
- **Arrange some meetings**
 - Perhaps you know fellow SolidWorks users, either locally, or even from the forums or blogs. If they are also attending, and you would like to meet them, try to arrange it ahead of time. There is a SolidWorks World section on the SolidWorks Discussion Forums that's perfect for talking about when and where such meetings could take place.
 - SolidWorks Corporation holds various Focus Group discussions with customers on conference Sunday. How to get invited to a Focus Group is a well guarded secret, but you can sometimes force the issue. Contact the SolidWorks User Community Manager and make your case – you never know.
 - More than 400 SolidWorks employees attend SolidWorks World each year, and they want to talk to you. If possible, arrange meetings ahead of time. If not, look for them at the conference – they're everywhere!!
- **Bring stuff with you**
 - Business cards – you will use more than you think
 - Bring some files (on a "jump drive" or CD) to share with others. If you have particular issues to discuss or resolve, having example files handy will make it easier to get the information you need. You can also get questions answered in the SolidWorks booth located in the Exhibit Hall during hall hours.
 - Bring a camera
- **Pack comfortable shoes**
 - Really! You will be doing a LOT of walking.

At the Show

Hopefully, you have arrived a day early, and are ready to begin your SolidWorks World preparations. There are a lot of things to consider, and getting to the event early gives you a leg up on other attendees. The little things mentioned here will go a long way toward getting you ready.

- **Check in to your room**
 - As long as you haven't arrived before the hotel will check you in, get this over with now. Make sure you ask if and where you can leave your bags when you check out – the last day of the conference doesn't end until late in the day. Also inquire about airport transportation if needed.
- **Take a walk**
 - Put on the comfortable shoes you packed and start looking around the conference center. Find out where the breakout rooms are located, where the general session rooms are, and look for the signs that point to the breakfast and lunch rooms. You may run into fellow attendees or SolidWorks employees – stop and say hello.
- **Register**
 - If the registration desk is open, get that done now. There are virtually no lines on Saturday and very small lines early Sunday. Once the majority of the attendees start arriving, the wait can be long.

Final Preparations

You know where you are, you know where you're going, and you've received your registration materials. Take a few minutes to look through the package and decide what you need to keep near, and what can wait until later. The most important piece of paper is your agenda booklet.

- **Circle or highlight your sessions**
 - I typically have two highlights; One for "can't miss" sessions and one for "looks good but could be persuaded to change"
 - If you're really a techie, enter all of your sessions into your iPhone, Blackberry, or organizer of choice.
- **Check out your breakout rooms**
 - Make a map or take notes as needed. Knowing when and where you need to be next is a huge time saver.
- **Get some rest, or have some fun**
 - SolidWorks World is always held in places where there's lots of stuff to do.

Handy Tips

Good preparation can only take you so far, you also need this list of handy tips to make the most of the SolidWorks World experience.

- **Good food is everywhere...mostly**
 - Starting with the Sunday evening welcome reception, the good folks at SolidWorks will make sure you're well fed. Breakfast and lunch are served each day, and mid-afternoon snacks are provided as well.
 - *Note: If you are involved with Focus Group discussions, you might get fed as well.*
- **Attend the exhibit area receptions**
 - Receptions are Sunday and Monday evening in the exhibit area, and the food and drinks flow freely. It's also a great opportunity to see some of the Partner Products in a relaxed environment.
- **Don't miss the offsite event**
 - You've been in sessions all day, you're tired, and it's tempting to skip the offsite event. Don't...you are going to have a great time.
- **Be early for everything**
 - Breakout sessions fill up fast, get there early and sit up front. The general sessions are also very popular, and the throng of attendees streaming into the general session room is a sight to behold. There are plenty of big screens throughout the room, but if you want a bird's eye view, start lining up at least 30 minutes before the doors open.
- **Have fun!**
 - Enjoy yourself. Don't get stressed out. Walk around the town (or the resort) and take in some of the local culture, food, and people.

Hopefully this guide will help make your first SolidWorks World conference a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Even if you've attended previous SolidWorks World conferences, these tips and suggestions can help you get the most out of the world's largest and best 3D CAD conference. If you would like to share your thoughts and ideas with future attendees, head over to the SolidWorks discussion forums or attend a local user group meeting and help spread the word.