



NETWORKING SUCCESS

Simple Tips for Getting Started

Professional networking is an important part of business development, yet it's reported that 80% of us are just not comfortable with the process. Here are some quick tips for reducing networking anxieties.

- **Value everyone.** Treat everyone you come in contact with kindly. Whether it's receptionists working the phone lines, high level CEO's, or the barista making your morning espresso. You never know how or where you'll meet the people who will impact your life/business.
- Ditch the old school method of "what's in it for me" and embrace the new school method of "what can I do for you." **Use positive networking** to do nice things for others, without the expectation of receiving anything in return...simple acts of kindness are noticed, appreciated, and rewarded.
- Invest \$7-\$10 in a **professional name tag** and wear it to events. Make sure the font sizes are large enough to be read from 4 feet away. Keep a tag in your vehicle, portfolio, or handbag so it won't be forgotten. Think of how sharp you'll look and feel without a 'Hello My Name Is' sticker on your shirt!
- **Business cards**...have them, use them, and don't run out. Be prepared for unexpected networking opportunities by keeping 8 cards in various locations (wallet, purse, car, presentation folder, laptop bag). More information is shared on business cards today including cell phone numbers, social media icons, and website addresses. Take advantage of two-sided printing if you need additional space...do not simply shrink font sizes and try to squeeze everything on one side.
- **Join a networking group**, such as a local chamber of commerce, where networking is encouraged and supported. An active chamber provides multiple opportunities for members to mix and mingle with other business professionals. Remember: memberships in *industry-related* associations are not the same as networking groups...those groups are valuable for providing educational opportunities and peer socialization but in the end you are spending time with competitors, not potential clients/customers.
- Take a friend, business associate, or spouse to events as a **networking wing-man/woman**. Work together to keep conversations going and tell others about your services or products...it's often easier to brag about someone else's business than your own. Do not bring a friend so you can sit together and talk at a table...tempting as that may be, it defeats the whole purpose of going to a networking event.
- Nervous about walking into a room of complete strangers? Keep in mind that 80% of the people in the room feel the same way you do. You can **avoid anxiety** by simply looking for a person who is alone. Walk over and start a conversation...they will greatly appreciate being rescued. Once you've gotten the ball rolling, watch for opportunities to invite others into your group, making introduction along the way. You'll soon be recognized as a helpful connector – that's a good thing!
- Keep a few **ice breaker questions** like these on hand: what are you working on this week, how did you get started in this line of work, what is the funniest thing you've experienced in business life, what makes your business different from your competitors? Don't forget to really listen to their answers.

I'll leave you with a quote from a networking book I thoroughly enjoyed reading, "Work the Pond" by Darcy Rezac: ***"You are who you are and if you treat people right you will be respected, liked and remembered. Have this attitude and you can enter a room with confidence."*** I highly recommend reading the entire book...its short, sweet and affordable. 😊

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