

Six Steps for Networking at an Event or Social Gathering

Step 1: Meeting People

Enter the room with confidence, stand up straight and smile. Look for a friendly face and introduce yourself. If you don't see an opportunity to meet someone right away don't panic. A sure fire way to strike up a conversation is to get in a line (to sign in, for food, for drinks, for the restrooms). You can also approach the person hosting the event and ask for an introduction. In addition, if the list of attendees is available prior to the meeting you can identify someone you would like to meet and approach someone to ask if the person you are looking for is at the meeting.

Step 2: Getting to Know People - The Ed Principle

Instead of trying to be interestING focusing on the 'ing') be interestED (focus on the 'ed') in the person you are talking with. You don't have to worry about what you will say (except for your brief pitch which comes later). In fact, you can make it a goal to talk as little as possible, I promise you will be remembered as a marvelous conversationalist. Memorize this phrase: 'Tell me more about...' and use it! Just relax, be yourself and listen.

Step 3: Giving First

Yes I know, the reason you are networking in the first place is because you want to get something. You want to meet more of your ideal clients and meet people who can refer to your ideal clients. But don't forget, networking is a two way street. It is about building relationships. I know you have something interesting to share, so why not give first? Perhaps you can recommend a great book or website, share an article, or maybe you can make a valuable introduction.

Step 4: Your Perfect Pitch

Eventually the person you are talking with may ask you what you do, so be ready! Don't ramble on about how long you have been in business or how your business process works. Do prepare a fabulous, short, and memorable pitch/ elevator speech (10-30 seconds long) that clearly communicates what you do and for whom you do it.

Step 5: Ending a Conversation

Remember, all conversations must end at some point so don't be afraid to politely excuse yourself and thank the person for her time. Reasons to wrap up can include going to get another drink, something to eat, going to the restroom, or needing to talk with someone before they leave. Whatever the reason, be honest and be genuine.

Step 6: Follow Up and Follow Through

This one is so simple and important yet somehow it frequently gets ignored. If you promise to do something (call, send an article, make an introduction) do it!

Think about making use of these networking tips the next time you plan to do some networking. The truth is people do business with people they know, like, and trust. This occurs over time and is all about building relationships, not about collecting business cards. Be yourself, be real and have fun!