

How to Work a Networking Event

1) Preparation – What to do Before the Event

- a) Know your strategy and goals
- b) BRING BUSINESS CARDS
- c) Discuss opening sentences
 - i) How do you know so and so?
 - ii) How long have you been a part of this association – how has it been for you?
 - iii) What do you think about.. the speaker, the topic, the weather,, etc.?

2) Connection – What to do At the Event

- a) Badge on right hand side so it follows the line of sight when shaking hands
- b) Approach host/hostess first to thank them (if there is one)
- c) Approach people alone or in groups of 3+
- d) Start by asking questions – let your natural curiosity lead
- e) Learn about their goals and think about how you can help them
- f) Most people will turn the conversation back to you – take the opportunity to share “succinctly and respectfully” who you are, what you do, what you are interested in learning. Give your prepared intro and let the conversation happen naturally according to their interest.
- g) If you would like their card, ask for it
- h) If you want them to have your card, offer it politely – If you ever run into someone who... will you keep me in mind?”
- i) Keep conversations short during networking time – no more than 5 minutes, unless you meet someone absolutely fascinating or you are seated next to them at a meal.
- j) WRITE NOTES on the back of the business cards telling you exactly if or how you want to follow up with this person.
- k) OK to bring a buddy, but resist the temptation to hang out with them. Two people are not approachable. Divide and conquer, then go back and introduce each other.

3) How to Handle Uncomfortable Situations

- a) They are rude. It's about them, not you – they are probably absorbed in something else or trying to act confident. Rarely do they intend to be rude. Let them save face, smile, say “enjoy the rest of the event” and move on.
- b) You forgot a name: This happens all the time. Admit you forgot and make a joke about your temporary mental lapse. Be kind to others – don't expect them to remember your name. Wear your tag and use subtle reminders in the conversation to help others place you.
- c) Someone is clinging to you: Offer to introduce them to someone. Be compassionate, you are doing them a disservice if you let them use you as a security blanket all night – they will only gain confidence through practice.
- d) The high pressure sales pitch – run! (or, offer constructive feedback. “If you don't give me space, I'll feel too pressured to consider your product”)

4) Follow Up – What to do After the Event

- a) Organize your cards! (Contact database?)
- b) Write thank you notes to who you met
- c) Call or Follow up on anything you promised
- d) Create a periodic contact plan (contact once /month, etc.) If it is individualized it will be more effective.