

100 Tips for Successful Networking

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Before the Event

1. When booking in to an event, type your name and contact details, or write neatly. That way, you can make sure your hosts have your name spelled correctly on your badge and the delegate list.
2. Dress appropriately for the occasion, but make sure you will be comfortable – you could be on your feet for a long time.
3. A networking event is a business meeting so treat it as such. Be prepared and arrive in good time.
4. If you tend to be nervous, plan go with a friend to boost your confidence. But don't spend the whole event with them; the point is to meet new people.
5. Set a goal for the event. Perhaps, commit to meeting five new people and catching up with five others.
6. Just before entering, take a deep breath and put yourself into a positive frame of mind.



Tools of the Trade

Business Cards

7. There is a lot of advice about what makes a good business card, some of it conflicting. People will say you should put information on both sides of the card; they will also say you should make notes on the back of other people's cards, difficult if there is no space! Your business card should say what needs to be said: a list of your services is a good use of space; a meaningless slogan probably isn't.
8. Take enough business cards with you. You could miss opportunities to pass your details on if you run out. It sounds simple, but it's surprising how often people fail to have a business card on them.
9. Keep your cards handy – in a pocket or an easy-to-handle business card case.
10. Have a system for collecting other people's cards to make sure you don't lose any. Your cards in one pocket, their cards in the other, is a system that works well for men. Women's clothes often have fewer pockets so a bit of inventiveness might be called for.

Badges

11. Take your own name badge. That way, if the one your hosts have provided is spelled incorrectly or uses a typeface that is too small to read, you just swap it for your own.
12. Pin your name badge high on your right lapel (or in that position if not wearing a jacket). That way it is positioned so that, when someone shakes your hand, your badge is in their eyeline and they can easily read your name.
13. Women should pin their badges higher rather than lower on the lapel, avoiding any discomfort from having others peering at their chests!



Entering the Room

14. Early arrival is good if you're a nervous networker. You can avoid the feelings of intimidation that come when you walk into a large crowd.
15. An early start also means you have the chance to talk to the hosts. If you've also had the opportunity to peruse the delegate list, you can ask them to introduce you to anyone you think might be interesting to talk to.
16. Don't feel you have to plunge straight in. Take a little time to assess the room and see who's there.

Approaching People

17. If you're nervous about approaching strangers, find someone who looks like you feel. They'll be delighted that you've made them feel more at ease and the event will be more comfortable for you both.
18. But remember – *everyone* is there to meet someone new. They *want* to talk to you and will be happy for you to approach them.
19. Look for open groups. They are much easier to approach than closed groups.



Closed Two



Open Two



Closed Three



Open Three

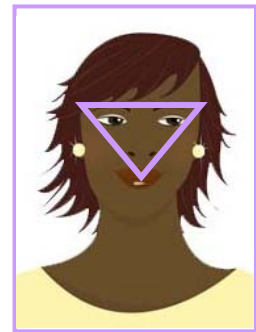
20. Say your name clearly. It's difficult enough for people to remember others' names so make sure you can be heard above the noise of the event.



Body Language 1

Eye Contact

21. Eye contact is an area where there are many cultural differences. In some cultures it is usual to maintain constant eye contact, in others even typical Western eye contact can seem intimidating. If you are networking with other nationalities, it is worth doing you homework the matter. However, in a UK setting these guidelines are useful:
22. Look people in the eye when you introduce yourself or are introduced to them. Hold the eye contact long enough to show that you are interested.
23. When approaching a group, make eye contact with each person as you say hello.
24. Staring directly into another person's eye can seem aggressive. Soften this effect by focusing your vision within the inverted triangle between the area just above the eyes and a point between the nose and lips.
25. Welcome new people into your group with friendly eye contact.
26. If you are nervous, don't let your reluctance to make eye contact let you down. If people can't look you in the eye, they will soon find someone else to make a connection with.
27. Looking away when you are speaking implies you are not interested in what you are saying. Looking away when someone else is speaking implies you are not interested in them.



Body Language 2

Handshakes

28. A confident handshake is where the two hands meet 'web to web'. The hands remain parallel as they move up and down two to three times. Both handshakers should use a firm a pressure.
29. Be sensitive to cultural variations. For example, it is common in eastern cultures (especially those where the handshake is not the traditional form of greeting) for the handshake to be much more gentle than in Europe and the US. Respect this, and move your style of handshake to meet theirs.
30. However, in typical western settings be aware of:
 - 'the dead fish' – a limp hand with little movement that comes across as wimpish in both men and women;
 - 'hamster hands' – typically a female trait where the fingers only are offered so a proper handshake is impossible;
 - 'the bonecrusher' – typically a male handshake and, whilst usually unintentional, can come across as aggressive and domineering;
 - 'the power shake' – a controlling handshake which starts off as a normal 'web to web' shake but where one party moves their hand on top as soon as the hands are linked; the shaker is endeavouring to assert their superiority
 - 'the double-grasp' – the shaker takes the other's hand in both of theirs; it can be genuine and warm with people you know but there's a danger of seeming insincere with strangers.
31. Avoid juggling plates and glasses *and* keep your right hand free for shaking. If the crockery and glassware provided allows, keep your napkin between the ring and little fingers of your left hand; hold the plate between your index and middle fingers; and hold the stem of your glass between index finger and thumb, using them to stabilise your plate.
32. Kissing, as an alternative to handshaking, is increasing in popularity but the British culture has no hard and fast rules and no tradition to draw on. It is seldom appropriate with strangers but it can be difficult to judge when someone is sufficiently familiar to 'upgrade' to kissing. If in doubt, follow the other's lead – and no foisting kisses on people where they aren't welcome.



Body Language 2

Smile!

33. Greet others with a smile, whether you are approaching them or they are approaching you.
34. Mean it! A fake smile is easily recognised. A real smile uses your whole face – not just your mouth – and shows you are happy to see the other person.
35. Create a special smile for each person you meet – not a fixed grin.

Your stance

36. Don't cross your arms. Although you might simply be feeling a bit chilly, it is generally interpreted as a defensive posture and so acts as a barrier to others approaching you.
37. Crossed legs are another 'closed' posture that can deter people.
38. An upright posture conveys success. Carry as little with you as you can get away with to stop you slumping and to give you ease of movement.
39. Leaning towards someone can show interest in them but don't overdo it or it becomes intrusive.
40. Leaning backwards from them looks as though you can't wait to get away.
41. Respect the comfort zone. In the west, and most global business settings, the Intimate Zone is the area 0 to 0.5m around us where we are comfortable with those who are emotionally close to us. The Personal Zone, from 0.5 to 1.2m, is where we meet, greet and shake hands with people. The Social Zone, from 1.2 to 3m is used mostly in business and in social encounters with people we don't know well. The Public Zone, extending beyond 3m, is an area we feel comfortable in when talking to large groups.



Talking to others 1

42. Take the lead when introducing people to each other. People who are not good at introducing themselves will be grateful for your effort, and it will help build your reputation as a good networker.
43. Don't be embarrassed to say, "Hi. I just wanted to come over and say hello." – it is what you're both there for, after all.
44. A good principle is to remember that we have two ears and one mouth, and that we should use them in that proportion. Asking questions and listening to the answers is an important part of networking. But don't forget to disclose something about yourself too.
45. Avoid closed questions that require only a 'yes' or 'no' answer – these are conversation killers.
46. Open questions are much better as they allow the conversation to flow.
47. Useful conversation starters are "How did you find the journey here?", "How did you first get to know the host?", "What made you decide to come to this event?"
48. To find a shared connection, ask them about their family or holiday plans, or see if you have any mutual acquaintances.
49. Don't simply ask what it is that they do. That just encourages them to say "I'm an accountant" (or whatever). Try "What's been keeping you busy this week?"; it gives them a chance to talk about something more interesting and gives you the chance to see if there are any problems you can help them with.
50. Avoid fruitless questions - "How's it going?", "How are you?". At the best you'll get a one word answer; at worst they'll tell you in mind-numbing detail!



Talking to others 2

51. If asked one of those questions, avoid answering with a simple "Fine". Take the opportunity to tell them something interesting about you.
52. Try asking, "Do you know many people here?" If they do, you could benefit from a quick round-up of who's who.
53. Be a pro-active networker – ask, "Who would be a good person for you to meet today/this evening?" and, if possible, introduce them.
54. To avoid sounding as though you are giving someone a 'grilling', try using 'softeners' at the beginning of a question. "So, how are you enjoying this event?", "That's interesting, would you recommend it to others?", "Now, I recognise your company name but I'm afraid I don't know much about you do...".
55. It can be difficult to remember people's names. If you know you've met someone before but you suspect that they can't quite place you, dispel the embarrassment for them. Try, "Hi. I'm Samina, we met a couple of weeks ago at..."
56. To help you remember their name, use it during your conversation – "Good to meet you Karen". Although don't be too heavy handed with this technique or it will become obvious what you are doing and start to grate.
57. Share useful information with people; they'll be more likely to remember someone who is helpful.



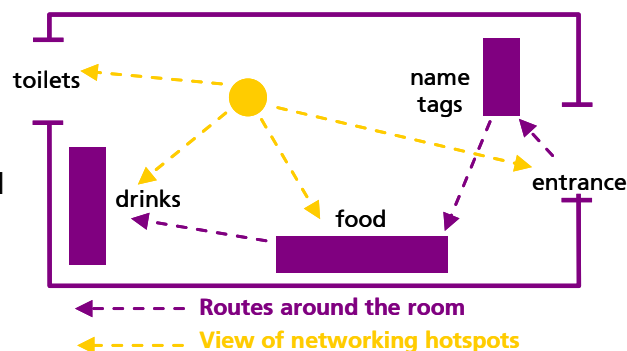
Your 30-second Introduction

58. You should be well prepared when you are asked "What do you do?" Your 30-second introduction should give more useful information than simply your job title so avoid bald statements.
59. Focus on how you help others. What problems do you solve for your customers, or what dreams do you fulfil?
60. Add a little intrigue but avoid being cryptic. "I turn the most awkward people in your payroll into model members of staff" might have someone itching to know how you do that. "I work wonders with your workforce" is not specific and sounds more than a little pretentious.
61. Describe an ideal or a typical customer. That way, if the person you are speaking to falls into that category, they can easily recognise themselves. If they don't, they are still able to recognise a good customer for you when they meet one.
62. You need to sound natural. A contrived 'spiel' will sound forced, and you will sound unconvincing. Practice your 30-second introduction when you are alone so that it flows off the tongue.
63. Practice it on other people too. If you get a blank look in return, it's likely that you haven't got it quite right. If you see a spark of recognition in their eyes ("That's just what I need!") you're definitely on the right track.



Working the Room

64. Remember the networking goals you set before the event. Circulate so that you can achieve them.
 - . It's OK to touch base with people you haven't seen for a while but don't stick like glue to people you already know. Get them to introduce you to new people.
66. It's tempting to approach people who seem to be like ourselves, familiar and comfortable. But a diverse network will bring greater benefits in the long run so make contact with people who *aren't* like you too.
67. At a networking event, people expect to be approached by strangers, so take the initiative and approach them. They also expect to move around, so don't latch on to them for too long.
68. If possible, face the door so that you can see people you want to meet (and those you might want to avoid!) as they come in. Be subtle about this, as you shouldn't appear more interested in this activity than in the person you are already talking to.
69. Identify the points in the room where most people will pass – from the entrance, by the food and drinks, and en route to the toilets. Locate yourself where you can maintain a good view of these hot spots.
70. Don't load up your plate with food on one trip to the refreshment table. Take just a small amount and you then have the perfect amount to go back for more as new people arrive there.
71. If you are networking at a seminar or conference, pre-event networking is key to ensuring you sit next to a person you want to connect with more closely. By approaching the person just five minutes or so before the seminar starts, you are ideally placed to join them as you take your seats. Better still, ask them as you go in, "Would you mind if I join you?"
72. Put yourself in the spotlight – or at the very least avoid dark corners where no one can see you.



Working the Table

73. Be the 'host' at your table – take the initiative to make introductions.
74. Keep your business cards handy – but don't 'deal' them out. It's not a poker game!
75. Practice good table manners and make sure others are comfortable with table etiquette.

Taking your Leave

76. Introduce the person you are speaking to someone else you know before moving on. Don't leave them standing alone.
77. Don't give someone else your card first. Ask for the other person's card; unless they really don't want to speak to you again (what have you done to achieve that?) they will ask for yours in return.
78. Look at their card long enough to absorb the information before putting it away safely. Don't just stuff it in a pocket or handbag.
79. If you need to make a note about them, do so on the back of their card. But remember cultural niceties; in the Far East the business card is more than just a handy record of contact details. It is considered a representation of the person themselves and scribbling notes on it is the height of bad manners.
80. Move on politely. "I've really enjoyed our conversation but I did promise I'd meet up with a couple of other people..."
81. If you genuinely think that the person is worth getting to know better, ask if you can contact them to arrange a more in-depth meeting. "I'd really like to know more about what you do/how we might work together but it's really too noisy here. May I give you a call and fix a time for a coffee?"
82. Ask permission to follow up and send them further information; that way they'll be expecting it when you do.
83. If the conversation in the group you are in has moved on and not included you, it's time for you to move on to new people.



Following-up

84. If you're going to follow up, do so promptly. Not only is it the courteous thing to do, it ensures that you are fresh in their mind and keeps the momentum of the relationship going.
85. A prompt follow up also means that they speak to you again sooner than they do one of your competitors.
86. If you've promised to do something for them – provide a piece of information, or arrange an introduction to someone – prompt action is even more important. Good networkers always keep their promises.
87. Find a good reason to keep in touch. Forwarding on some useful information or inviting them to a different networking event are good ways.
88. Organise your details of your new contacts when you get back to the office. Include dates and events when you met them and any other information that will help you to help them in the future.
89. If you can't help them, who do you know who can?
90. Following up is the next step in building a relationship. One phone call is not enough. Be pro-active in keeping in touch.



10 Golden Rules

91. All other things being equal, people will do business with other people that they know and trust. Your networking activity should be focused on becoming that trusted person.
92. Networking is a marathon, not a sprint. It's about building long-term relationships not quick sales. Give people time to get to know you, and invest the time in getting to know them.
93. Networking is something you *do*, not something you go to. Don't just sit back and wait for someone else to organise a networking event for you. You can network anywhere, with anyone.
94. Good manners are fundamental to a good networker. Treat people as you would like to be treated and they will treat you well in return.
95. Assess your networking activities regularly. Your time is valuable so make sure you are getting a return on your investment.
96. Remember, however daunting it might feel to walk into a room full of strangers, they want to meet you as much as you want to meet them.
97. Networking *is* different to socialising. Whilst it's always good to enjoy your networking activities, remember that they *are* work.
98. A good networker makes connections across networks, linking people with other people and with sources of information. By doing this you become a valuable person to know.
99. And what goes around, comes around. Have a giving attitude but never keep a check list of who owes you a favour. The favours you do will be returned in good time.
100. Quality is more important than quantity. Five good new contacts are more important than 20 weak ones. One excellent new contact alone will make the event worth attending.

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