



Networking Tips

Approach networking in three steps: plan, build relationships and follow up.

I. Plan for Effective Networking.

Plan for a sustained, focused effort in your networking. Every new contact is a resource to be nurtured. If you don't budget time for building a relationship and follow up it is a wasted contact.

Know why you are networking with each particular group. Customize your strategy for each audience, but stay focused on your critical needs and don't risk being perceived as insincere.

- What can they offer you?
- What can you offer them?
- How can you get their attention and make them see how you are different?
- What would be a good relationship foundation that you can build on later?

Plan your 20-second elevator speech. Help them understand how you might fit into their plans in a nontechnical way. Tell them:

- Who you are (your role in the company, specialty, skills)
- What you do (product, market, service area)
- Where you are in your process and what your goals are

Be prepared. Always have:

- Your business cards
- Something to write with
- A few ideas to share to open dialogue

Keep a simple networking journal to record who you meet, follow-up actions, potential mutually beneficial opportunities with them and when someone makes a referral for you.

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2. Focus on Building Relationships instead of collecting business cards, “Friends” or “Connections.”

A network of meaningful relationships will be working for you even when you are not aware of it. Give more than you take and believe that your favors will be rewarded.

In conversation think about the other person’s needs and how you can help. Listen carefully. Ask good questions that build on the dialogue and lead to a follow up opportunity.

Be mindful about what people find attractive. Be honest and genuine. Look the other person in the eye, speak clearly with confidence and passion. The way you make them feel will last longer than the details of your conversation.

Build a reputation for dependability. Your character will reflect on someone who gives you a referral. Aim to under-promise, and then over-deliver.

Remember the basics. Pay attention, keep your remarks positive, seek and give constructive feedback, say thank you. Pay attention to body language since a lot of communication is nonverbal.

3. Follow up to Create Value from Your Network.

- Follow up with people you meet and see how you might build on the relationship.
- Do what you say you will.
- Make personal calls to find out how things are going, not just to make a sale. This will help you make better referrals for them.
- Call on everyone that makes a referral to you and thank them.
- Keep track of encounters, follow-up and referrals in your networking journal.

References

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