

12 Steps to Getting the Most Out of Networking Events

by Lataya Ballard



We've all heard how important it is to attend networking events but many people dread the idea of walking into a room full of strangers and engaging in conversation. Networking is more than "talking to strangers" – it's building relationships for business growth. Attending networking events will help you start the process building those relationships, so here are 12 simple steps to get the most out of networking events:

Step 1: Register well in advance. This lets the organizers know that you are serious and excited about the opportunity to attend their event and you will be able to build a rapport to ...

Step 2: Find out who will be attending. In some cases, an organization will post the list of registered attendees. There may be a list of those who attended previously, but that doesn't guarantee that those same people and companies will be represented when YOU attend. By registering in advance and building a rapport with the organizers, you can ...

Step 3: Make a list of people attending who you would like to meet or of types of businesses that are a good prospect for you. If you have been successful at steps one and two, then you can easily ...

Step 4: Ask the organizers to introduce or point out key people to you since by now you will have built a trust. So if you ...

Step 5: Arrive Early, then you will get an opportunity to meet those persons as early in the game as possible and you won't spend the entire event sitting in one place, eating a meal, and listening to the speaker when your purpose was to ...

Step 6: Meet new people. This may sound basic, but MEET NEW PEOPLE.

Don't spend the majority of your time talking to people you already know.

(Step 6.5: Remember to exchange cards or contact info. I suggest even trying to set an informal follow-up appointment on the spot with at least three

people every time you attend an event.) Meet new people so that your circle of influence won't be limited. This also gives you an opportunity to ...

Step 7: Introduce people you meet to other people you've previously met.

This action gives all parties involved that "warm and fuzzy" feeling because you

thought highly enough of them to introduce them to someone else. Flattery doesn't hurt as long as it isn't inappropriate. Speaking of which....

Step 8: Watch your mouth! Watch what comes out of your mouth. Your words are often what constitute your first impression. Be sure to avoid unprofessional conversations while networking. Be respectful and conscious of your language, tone and choice of discussion. Watch what comes out and watch what goes into your mouth! I recommend avoiding alcohol at networking events, even if you think you can "hold your own." Most people tend to talk a bit too much, say things they never intended, or even remember saying later when even a small amount of alcohol is involved. The last thing you want to do is unwittingly say something offensive to a prospective client because you've "loosened up" with a drink or two.

Step 9: Go with a friend or business associate. If you're going to a new place it is good to have a buddy to read the directions in the car, someone to introduce to the new people you meet, and truly network with so that you can ...

Step 10: Give referrals and share your circle of influence with other people. It helps their business, and in turn, they naturally want to help YOUR business. Be sure to ...

Step 11: Follow up and build relationships. After the event is over is when the networking really begins. The next time you attend a networking event, call someone up that you met and offer to take them to lunch or coffee. Invite them to another event. Find a way to develop a professional relationship outside of that networking event where you met. You could gain a friend or maybe your biggest client!

Step 12: Repeat steps one-eleven! Much success to you in your business networking!



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