

## Strategic Networking Tips for In-Person Events

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### PRIOR TO THE EVENT

#### ✓ **Set Goals**

- Prepare a few questions ahead of time that will help start conversations
  - “What inspired you to attend tonight?”
  - “Tell me about yourself.”
  - “What do you do for work?”
  - “How do you know the host?”
  - “How long have you been associated with this organization?”
- If you have a list of attendees, be intentional and plan on who you want to meet. What do you want to learn from them? Think about those questions.
- Practice your talking points.
- Set targets; for example, meet 3-5 new people at this event. Simple goal and very attainable.

#### ✓ **Travel Light**

- Carry only a portfolio that you can tuck under arm or a bag that is easy to throw over your shoulder.

#### ✓ **Business Cards**

- Double check to make sure you have business cards set to go.
- Figure out where you are going to place them so they are easy to grab when you make an exchange (suit pocket, portfolio, briefcase pocket).

#### ✓ **Nametag**

- Wear it on the right side of your jacket/shirt/blouse so people can see it when you shake hands.

#### ✓ **Entrance into the room**

- Scan the room first...even circle the room once for the layout and become familiar with the environment (tables, people you know, food, bar, coat rack, etc.).

### MEETING SOMEONE

#### ✓ **Find an Individual** (smile when you approach them so they don't get freaked out!)

- Nice warm-up tactic as it is much easier to do a 1-on-1 conversation than breaking into a group.
- 3 foot rule = if you get within 3 feet of someone, talk to him/her.
- Position yourself between the entrance and the refreshment table = people traffic!

#### ✓ **Solid Handshake**

#### ✓ **Introduction of Self**

- State name clearly and slowly.
- Remember other person/people's names – be honest if you forget and ask again.

#### ✓ **Focus on the Person**

- Keep direct eye contact and listen actively; use the time you're talking to look away.
- Make them talk about themselves...ask away! Be curious!

## CONVERSATION

### ✓ **Get Others Talking**

- Ask questions, ask questions, ask questions = The best conversationalists do the least amount of talking. Being able to get others to talk about themselves shows sincere interest of the listener. **\*\*Biggest mistake in networking is talking too much!\*\***

### ✓ **Small Talk**

- Ask open ended questions (How, Why, What, Tell me more...).
- Weather, commute to event, building, room, speaker, common interests, etc.

### ✓ **Look for “Loose Bricks”**

- Many people are guarded and have their walls built up...try to get past that wall.
- “Loose bricks” are their hobbies, personal interests, children, schooling, passions...get them talking about these topics and the wall will crumble! They will become more open.
- This shows you are being genuine, interested and curious to learn more about them.

### ✓ **Play Ping Pong**

- Create a casual, back-and-forth conversation.

### ✓ **Conversation Keepers**

- Know that it is OKAY to not relate/connect with everyone.
- If the conversation becomes deeper (careers, current events, talk shop, etc.), determine if it might be beneficial for the relationship to grow. Indicate that you enjoyed the conversation and would like to meet again.
- Continue asking for assistance or advice.
- Request their business card first and then give them yours...this is a less presumptuous move.

### **Entrance to Conversation:**

Fade in • Body language: open posture, be aware of surroundings, eye contact, and don't cross arms Extend introductions to each other and people you know • Go with a friend (but don't hang forever)

### **Exit to Conversation:**

Know when to move: bored, you've messed up, group is dwindling, and conversation is sparse Grin-grip-go • Thank them • Agree to part to meet others • Use excuses = restroom, food, drink

## DO

- Ask questions that engage others in the conversation
- Wait patiently, making eye contact until a pause in the conversation so you can introduce yourself or ask to join
- Allow others to join a conversation by finding a natural break and reaching out to them
- Build relationships by keeping your word
- Touch base with a number of people at the event
- Be professional and respectful

## DON'T

- Dominate the conversation
- Interrupt an ongoing conversation
- Consume alcohol prior to the event
- Ignore a person who may want to join your group
- Fail to follow up on what you said you would do
- Talk with only 1 or 2 people you already know
- Make comments or show offensive behavior