

A Dozen Things to Consider About Networking

No matter what your industry, career, or experience level, networking can help you make valuable connections. Networking is a great first step towards building lasting personal and professional relationships and a fabulous way to grow your business.

1. Know the purpose of the networking organization you are attending. What are the goals and agenda of the group? What are the rules? If you are uncertain, contact the director of the organization and ask.
2. Take your time! Realize that networking is a process that requires time. Networking groups and events are not the place to make a quick sale. Networking is about making connections, sharing ideas and information and building relationships that last.
3. When building a network, remember to give before you get. Take time to help others before seeking favors for your self. If you focus on handing out cards to a million people in anticipation of getting immediate results, you'll be disappointed. By first trying to assist someone else, rewards eventually will come your way.
4. Have a mission, purpose and goals when networking, but be honest with people by respecting their time and don't have a hidden agenda.
5. Talk to strangers. Don't wait for someone to introduce you, introduce yourself. It's as simple as extending your hand and saying 'hi'.
6. Become active in the organizations you belong to. Volunteer to serve on committees and get involved in activities that will enable you to interact with others.
7. Keep your business cards handy, but don't deal them out impersonally.
8. Quality versus Quantity. The number of people you know or meet doesn't matter. It's the *quality* of your contacts that matters. Take the time to truly get to know people and learn about their business. The more details you know, the better source of referrals you can be for them.
9. Don't ask for free advice and don't give unsolicited advice.
10. Be outgoing and friendly. Keep conversations brief and upbeat.
11. When someone asks you how he or she might help you or what kind of referral is a good referral for you, be very specific. Don't just say 'anyone and everyone'. Educate them on exactly the type of referral you're looking for.
12. Enjoy yourself! We are blessed enough to live in an area of the country where there are thousands of wonderful people to meet and get to know. Networking can be fun, enjoy it!

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