

Top 10 Networking Tips

Whether you are self-employed or working for a company, networking is one of the critical skills you need in today's work environment. Your network can help you quickly respond to work changes (e.g. downsizing, client loss) by putting you in touch with new contacts and opportunities. Here are 10 networking tips to keep in mind.

1. Build relationships, not the record for handing out the most business cards

Networking is about getting to know someone and building relationships. It's the conversation that helps you understand the other person, their interests, and challenges. **The business card only has value once you've developed rapport, established common interests or determined how you can help each other.**

2. Focus on the other person

Treat the person you are talking to like they are the most important person in the room. **Smart networkers know that networking is about showing an interest in others not others showing an interest in you.**

3. Be the host

When hosting a party, we take care of our guests. We take their coats, get them a drink, introduce them to other guests and do whatever we can to make them feel comfortable. Try being the host at any event that you attend. **You'll automatically put yourself in a position to meet more people and make others feel comfortable.**

4. Give

Giving is the basic premise of networking because, as they say, "What goes around comes around" and people will usually want to help you in return. **Help others in whatever way you can with a valuable contact, a key networking event, or a worthwhile association.** Often information we take for granted can be valuable to someone else.

5. Make an effort to get out and network

A good rule of thumb is to get out to about 4 events per month which is only 1 per week. This will help you keep your commitment to networking. Not sure where to go? Start with your local chamber of commerce.

6. Look, listen and learn

Take the time to learn from others that you consider good networkers. Notice what makes them good and see if you can easily adopt a few techniques.

7. Approach only one person or three or more at an event

You are more likely to get a positive response when you approach 1 individual or a group of 3 or more people. **The dynamic of two makes it very difficult to break into a conversation** and you could be waiting for some time.

8. Check in regularly with your network

Keep in touch with your network to see what they are up to and how you can help them. **You never want to turn to your network when you really need them especially when you haven't bothered staying in touch.** Call and say hello, send an interesting article, or invite them to a networking event.

9. Introductions make the network go round

Freely introduce individuals within your network who might benefit from meeting each other. **A good network is an active one.**

10. Don't assume or judge

You never know who you are talking to, what they do or who they know. Never assume and give everyone a chance and treat them equally.

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As published on BusinessPartnerships.ca