

10 Strategies You Can Use to Make Your Face-to-Face Networking Successful

1. You MUST have a goal.

- If you want to go so you can catch up with friends, that's a goal.
- If you want to meet new professionals, that's a goal.
 - Define this. How many people, what type of professionals do you need to meet?
- If you want to talk to people who can help you, that's a goal.
 - Define this. Who is your target? Who can teach you?

2. Prepare, prepare, prepare.

- Bring your business cards or other material. If I'm interested, I want to leave with something of yours.
- Know who attends the events you go to. Find out - it's not hard to do so.
 - How could you find out?
 - Why should you know?
- Plan some topics to chat about.
 - Brainstorm some topics - last wedding, hottest event ever, craziest thing!

3. Your Arrival

- If you're shy - or even if not - arriving early is best!
 - Why? You're the established one. You can be talking to someone and introduce them to someone else.
 - Put your stuff down - create a home base for you in the room. If you can't bear to leave something (purse, computer...) then hold it close to your body.
 - Also, by doing this early, you avoid the temptation to sit next to folks you know well. Unless that's your goal!

4. Don't be a Grab and Go

- I've seen many, many types of people at networking events. And there are just some that should not. I have the "pleasure" of knowing a "Grab and Go". Let me demonstrate. They just introduce themselves, grab a card, and go.

- Now, yes, you get the card, but what else? Nothing. Now, I love business cards, but, there needs to be a connection in order for it to be beneficial to both of you.
- These people many times do not want to connect with you. They want to sell you.

5. Your Elevator Pitch is NOT the Only Intro You Need

- How many of you actually have an elevator pitch?
 - Do you know what one is?
 - No more than 30 seconds.
 - Nutshell what you do to an audience that may or may not know you.
 - Can you do it cold?
 - Giving this in a face to face introduction is just **WRONG**. You need something smaller and softer.
 - Your name, business, and what you do.
 - Your name, business, and something catchy to “remember” you by.
 - Be careful with this, because it can get cheesy - fast!

6. Can you juggle?

- Now, you can be doing everything right and still run into this one.
- Try not to have anything in your hands - drink, food. The best thing is just your cards.
- That’s when that home base from earlier is so important! Get your food and drink and then go set it down. You’ll have down times where you can go back and grab a bite.

7. “And what about you?”

- These words should always be on the tip of your tongue. It’s what you should ask each and every person.
- It’s all about being approachable and the perception of others.

8. Don’t be a S.A.P.

- I read a networking book recently and the author said this - and it is **SO** true!

- So, don't be a Sneak A Peek! Constantly checking your phone for e-mails or texts is not what networking is about.
- I know it's hard, but I promise, the messages and e-mails will still be there in an hour. Really!

9. Listen.

- You'd think this one is self explanatory, but...
- As humans, all of us love to talk about ourselves, and during someone else's time to speak, we naturally think about what we're saying next, missing valuable chunks of what the other person is saying.
- We (and I mean everyone) has to focus on really listening!

10. Follow Up!!

- Just like the last one, you'd think this is general knowledge, but...
- Did you really hit it off with someone? Then, get back in touch with them!
- The wedding business is all about referrals - partnering with other professionals is a great way to get those referrals!

Resources:

DoAne, Susan. Face to Face. New York: Fireside, 2008.

Misner, Alan. BusinessNetworking. May 2008. <<http://businessnetworking.com/>>

Misner, Alan. SuccessNet Online. May 2011. BNI. <<http://successnet.czcommunity.com/>>

What Should You Remember?

The 10 strategies are great, and will help you be a success in face to face networking.

But there is an 11th strategy...

Have Fun!

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