

7 Steps To Better Networking

WHILE WE ALL RECOGNISE the importance of networking to gain business there is very little written on strategies for effectively networking a room of strangers in the precious little time normally available at, for example, business functions.

Many a time you have been in a group and, while enjoying the company, you are conscious of the potentially lost opportunity for making those "VALUABLE" contacts. You may have occasionally politely exited a group and joined, say, two people only to find one leaves quickly – two minutes later, you understand why and, for some short time, you're stuck until you can find an inoffensive opportunity to exit.

Assuming a person is socially confident, are there any rules, tactics or suggestions for effectively networking a room in a relatively short space of time?

A positive mindset is far and away the most important factor in making these events a success. It doesn't matter how many breakfast/lunches/dinners you frequent, without the right attitude it's a waste of time.

Many people arrive at these networking events stressed, angry and basically not wanting to be there. What they don't realise is they do themselves a disservice by attending because all they will attract is negative people like themselves. They are almost certainly guaranteed to have a miserable time. So how can you maximise your attendance at these events?

1. Decide why you are attending the event.

What do you want to get out of it?

Is there a specific person you want to meet?

Are you looking for a certain service provider?

The clearer you are on why you are going, the more chance you have of achieving it.

2. Remember to take your business cards.

A business card that clearly states your name, what you do and your contact details is imperative for effective networking. In Singapore, business cards are called name cards. Give your business card to the person you are meeting as part of your introduction: "Hi, I'm Fred Bloggs. I'm a Retail Manager." That is as much as you are going to say about yourself, unless they ask.

3. Don't sell your product or services at the event.

If the person expresses interest, suggest that you phone them later to discuss it further. You cannot control the situation and may be called to breakfast/lunch/dinner mid-pitch which can blow a great opportunity to make a sale.

4. Have quality conversations rather than quantity.

If there are 50 people at the event, don't expect to speak to all 50. Be content with a quality conversation with 5-7 people who, the next day, will look at your card and remember you and what you spoke about. And more importantly to successful networking, they'll remember you at the next meeting.

5. The best networkers are the best listeners.

Anyone will speak to you for 10 minutes if you are not speaking about yourself.

6. Listen to the latest news or talkback radio.

Listen to the radio on your way to the event, so that you have a couple of interesting current topics to talk about.

7. Avoid talking about work.

Eighty per cent of the population don't get recognition on the job and don't want to speak about their job at all.

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