



Tips on How to Revitalize Your Networking Strategy

We all know that networking is crucial to new business development. People do business with people they know, like and trust. So we understand that every business event is a chance to make new contacts and build ongoing connections.

Why then, do we dread the power breakfast, lunch time socializing and after hours mingling? Have you never mastered the art of balancing your wine glass in one hand and a plate of appetizers in the other while offering your card? Or is it just a simple case of business networking burnout? It's time to revitalize your approach and brush up on some basic techniques to make networking productive again.

Develop your game plan

Take the time to prepare and it will help you accomplish more at your next event.

- Determine what your objectives are for attending. Is your goal to meet the speaker? Develop new contacts in your job search? Generate sales leads? Make a goal of whom and how many people you want to meet at the event.
- If possible, review the attendee list in advance and identify a few people you'd like to connect with.
- Practice your elevator speech. Be able to describe who you are and what you do in 30 seconds or less.
- Make sure you have enough business cards and that they are up to date.

Mix and mingle

The event is here and you're prepared and looking your best. Don't be a wallflower, get out there and mingle.

- Wear your name tag on the right side for a clear view of your name.
- Introduce yourself and offer a firm handshake, but not bone crushing.
- Start the conversation with small talk. Your goal is to develop a personal relationship and asking a few friendly questions will reveal common interests. Some ice breakers are "what do you do?", "how did you get started in the industry?", or "what is your target market/what types of individuals or companies do you typically work with?". Once you have determined if there are any synergies, suggest a potential future meeting (meet for coffee, etc.), if appropriate. Offer a business card and ask the other person for one. Introduce them to others you may know at the event who may be a good contact for them.
- Don't stay too long in one place. Excuse yourself and continue mixing.

Follow up

The event is over but your work is not done. In fact, it is just beginning.

- Write notes on the backs of business cards you collected. Record anything you think may be useful in remembering each person.
- Be sure to follow up with those you've met, share information and offer to help in any way you can. Set up any meetings that you suggested with people at the event. If you think there is the potential for future business, add the person to your monthly newsletter list or send them relevant information that may help their business. Do this on an ongoing basis. This demonstrates that you have a true interest in them and will keep you top of mind if/when they require your services/products. You also continue to build rapport over time.
- Refer them to others. Givers get back.

You still have to learn how to balance the glass and the plate, but if you follow this advice, you'll get better results from your networking efforts.

"You can close more business in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you." – Dale Carnegie

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