

Networking: 12 Basic Tips

1. Prepare

Rehearse a short introduction (30 seconds or less) explaining who you are and what you want to do.

2. Attend Events

Try to attend 1-2 events per month where you can network, and join groups so you have a chance to build relationships through regular meetings. Here are some places you can find events:

- Professional groups
- Industry conferences
- Career Planning & Development (ex. job fair)
- Meetup.com

3. Rescue People

Worried about being the awkward one? So are a lot of other people. Look for people who are hiding behind phones or standing alone at the buffet and strike up a conversation. They'll be grateful you rescued them!

4. Have Convo Starters Ready

Try to stick with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions such as "How did you get your start in PR?" or "What brings you here today?" make it easy to maintain the conversation.

5. Use LinkedIn

Networking online can be just as important as face-to-face contact. Maintain a positive online presence, especially on social networks built for business such as LinkedIn.

6. Compliment Others

It's easy to wish you'd thought of the idea first or won the award. Instead, take the chance to introduce yourself by sincerely complimenting their accomplishment and asking how it came about.

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7. Give of Yourself

Focus on giving rather than receiving in your networking conversations. Maybe they have an issue in their work that you have experience with or that you've read an article about recently. Offer your insight! Give without expecting anything in return; this kind of honest investment in others creates a foundation of trust, just like in any other relationship.

8. Be Honest

Giving is great, but don't over-promise. Don't say you'll do something if it's not going to happen. If you do commit to something, do it right away.

9. Be Authentic

Networking is draining enough without trying to be someone you're not. Be yourself and foster real connections.

10. Be a Good Listener

Keep conversations going easily by being curious about the other person. Use active listening skills instead of focusing on what you'll say next.

11. Follow Up!

Get a business card from your new contact and write a note on it about what you discussed. Within two days, either add them on LinkedIn and send a message or send a short email. Make sure to reference your conversation. If you want to go above and beyond, include an article or news item you think might interest your contact.

12. Improve Yourself

Be the type of person other people want to meet! This will encourage others to reach out to you, besides adding to your confidence.