

Building Your Networking Skills

8 Quick Tips

Networking events can seem very intimidating, but they can be a resource that will help propel your career to new heights. It is always important to go into a networking event with enthusiasm and a set goal in mind. Use these ideas to help make your next networking experience a successful one.

1. **Network online** - According to recent research by The Institute For Corporate Productivity, 64% of business professional's network online. In today's Web 2.0 environment, you cannot afford to ignore this networking opportunity and potential leads you could generate via social networking sites.
2. **Start with LinkedIn.com**, the leading business networking - Membership is free, and you can pro-actively search for and connect with customers and prospects. Also, LinkedIn.com users can post questions to the "Answers" section on the site. Make an effort to answer questions relevant to your area of expertise. Not only will you add value to your connections, but you will also get additional exposure and attract prospective customers who will seek you out!
3. **Arrive early** - Treat the event like an important appointment. By arriving early, you get comfortable in a more intimate setting with the other early arrivals. It can be intimidating to walk into a room filled with people, so go early and let the room fill up around you.
4. **Show confidence** - Speak confidently, decisively, and with authority. If you are confident in your conversations and support your ideas with evidence, people will take notice and respect that you know what you are talking about and that you mean business.
5. **Circulate** - Don't just talk to the people that you know. Get out there and go network!
6. **Meet with VIPs or speakers** - If there are VIPs or speakers at the event, prepare ahead of time. Do some research on the individual(s) so that you are informed when you talk with them. Compliment them on their speech or talk to them about how the topic of their speech or their field relates to what you do.
7. **Stay late** - When you stay late, the smaller crowd also gives you the opportunity to circulate in a more intimate setting. It also provides you with an opportunity to connect with the event's coordinator. Thank him or her for hosting the event. The event coordinator can give you some additional insight about who attended the event and who might be at the next event. It's never too early to prepare for the next event.
8. **Have a robust profile within your Resume** - Put in as much relevant information as you can that demonstrates the value you bring to the job. Technical people put in all the keywords you think prospective customers may use to search for a service provider in your field. Remember, you want to make it easy for people to find you!