

How to Network like a PRO

WITH 10 EASY TIPS

1. BRING BUSINESS CARDS.

This is one of the most important reminders in networking - To both collect, and give out your cards - if you don't have any, you look unprofessional, and become forgettable. Once people have this small advertising nugget, they will take it back and refer to it going forward. Be sure it looks professional, as nothing will bury you quicker than having a business card that looks like your little brother did it.

2. BE PREPARED AND HAVE A WINGMAN.

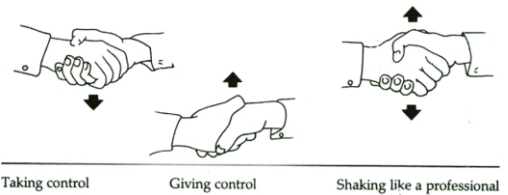
Regardless of the purpose, know what kind of event you're going to and how to dress. Is it a conference? Is it a black-tie affair or is it a business networking event? This will not only determine how you dress but to some extent, how you act. It's also a good idea to know who will be there and to have a 'wingman' available to help make conversations easier and to be able to draw people to you and into your own discussion. As long as you remember that you are there to meet others and not be tied to your wingman, this can be very beneficial.

3. HAVE YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH READY.

Be ready to clearly and concisely describe what you do if someone asks, in one or two sentences. This is NOT a sales pitch. Your goal is to start making connections and relationships. If you have the right 'elevator speech', it should automatically entice people to ask more about what you do. Sales may or may not happen - but only after a rapport and a relationship is formed.

4. HAVE A SOLID, FIRM HANDSHAKE

Believe it or not, many people will judge you on the sole quality of your handshake. Too firm, and you crush the hand of another and intimidate them. Sweaty palms, or shaking hands like a dead fish signifies nervousness and weakness. Maintain eye contact while shaking hands. Nothing will communicate self confidence, sincerity, and camaraderie more than this one gesture.



5. BE YOURSELF, SMILE AND DON'T BE SHY.

It doesn't help to know that first impressions are everything, and that people will form an opinion within the first 7 seconds of meeting you. However, with that being said, don't be afraid to be yourself - within limits. Put your best foot forward, but know that it's ok to show a bit of your goofier side and your sense of humour. It sets you apart from everyone else in the crowd who might be acting overly professional. And smile! It not only relaxes and relieves your stress, it does the same for everyone else you meet.

6. ASK QUESTIONS, AND LISTEN.

Don't wait around for someone to approach you. To get the conversation started, simply walk up to a person or a group, and say, "Mind if I join you" or "What brings you here?" Look people in the eye, (you should know what their eye color is) repeat their name, really listen to what they have to say, and offer topics that are easy to discuss. Most people ask, but are scanning the room for their next contact. Don't be that person.

7. DON'T HIJACK THE CONVERSATION.

Some people who are nervous about or dislike networking overcompensate by trying to take over the discussion. Remember: The most successful networkers are good at making other people feel special. Be a conversationalist, not a talker. Once you're conversing, be intuitive and know when the conversation is over. Move on at that time.

8. GIVE OF YOURSELF AND BE HELPFUL.

Every relationship has two sides, and one of the keys to networking is helping others. Look for ways to help people you meet - and mean it. You not only gain people's trust by going above and beyond, but people remember that. Good things always come back to you.

9. FOLLOW UP.

It's often said that networking is where the conversation begins, not ends. If you've had a great conversation, ask for the best way to stay in touch. Some people like email or phone; others prefer social networks like LinkedIn. Get in touch within 48 hours of the event to show you're interested and available, and reference something you discussed, so your contact remembers you. Always walk away with a card at the very least and write something pertinent to the conversation on the back as a reminder.

10. HAVE FUN!

People can sense when you are nervous, and when you don't want to be there. Relax, be yourself and have fun - but not too much fun ;)