

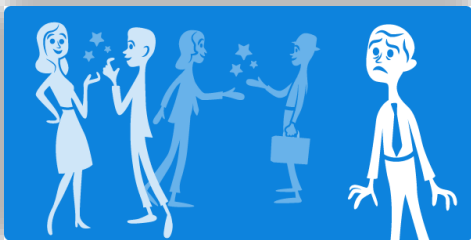
The Everyman's Guide to Networking like a Pro

The biggest words of the 80's right along with power lunches, the power look, and power ballads were power networking. Although 'networking' has been pigeon-holed into some not-so-great categories, today we're talking about how *authentic* networking is about much more than just exchanging business cards and paying top dollar for a fancy martini.

Networking is the act of building relationships, connections, links, and even friendships with others. Building genuine connections and learning how to network properly can be achieved by anyone. And once mastered, these abilities will become one of the most used tools in your social skills arsenal.

Everyone's heard the saying, "It's not what you know, it's *who* you know" and in today's world that phrase rings truer than ever.

Whether you want to build your network for career advancement, job opportunities, sharing knowledge or just to be more social you need to start networking now.



Building real connections is not a zero-sum game. Great networkers have the ability to build quality connections and have mutually beneficial relationships by creating open lines of communication and creating an atmosphere that allows both parties to understand how they can help each other. The secret to being a successful networker comes down to one simple concept:

Figure Out How You Can Help Others

The best networkers build genuine relationships and give more than they receive. Forget your personal agenda. Just be open, friendly, honest & genuine and you'll do great! You may be shy or even a bit scared. Remember, it's okay to be a little awkward. Come prepared so you can handle the nerves and most of all, be authentic.

The benefits from learning to be a successful networker far outweigh any awkwardness that stems from learning the skill. It may not be easy at first. If it was, everyone would be amazing at it, but with a little bit of direction and some practice anyone can build a first rate network.

But how do I network successfully?

Whether you're planning to network at an event, a job fair, a company gathering or even a barbeque with friends; the master networker always knows to **have a plan** of what they are going to achieve during the event. Come prepared with answers for basic questions that you may get asked throughout the evening like;



- What are your strengths/talents?
- What are your skill sets that make you valuable?
- How can you help others?

Maybe you want to make 5 new business connections? Or perhaps, you need to get to know someone specific. By creating a realistic goal prior to attending you can set yourself up for success and you can track your progress. A goal will help keep you motivated and you'll have an extra incentive to stop yourself from being a wallflower and force yourself to turn on the charm to build quality relationships.

How do I charm the pants off everyone and get what I want?

Step 1: Be Authentic

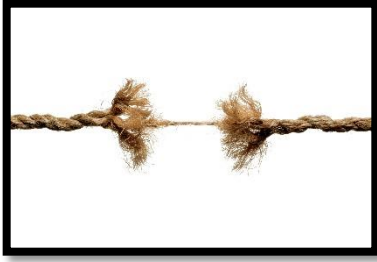
Everyone going to a networking event is attempting the same things - make connections, get business cards, find a new job, etc. However, the easiest way to set yourself apart is by nailing the first impression and being shockingly helpful.

People are much more likely to help you when they have shared interests and genuinely like you as a person. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to jump right into the "so what do you do" conversation.

Always start by learning their name and remembering it! Ask questions unrelated to the job or event – learn their goals, dreams, and aspirations. This will help to grow a bond that is stronger than simply asking about work.

Perhaps this person's dream is similar to a passion of yours. Maybe you have similar hobbies. Possibly your sister's went to college together! Who knows? The point is, if you don't ask and don't think outside the box you'll never know how much stronger you could have built a relationship.



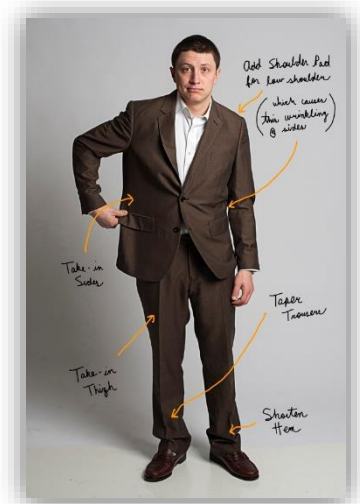


Think of your networking like building a tightrope; would you rather have one string (work) that connects you to others? Or would you prefer multiple instances of common ground (work, family, interests, food, etc) that can build a stronger bond? At the end of the day the most important aspect is to be authentic and sincere, don't be someone you're not. Be the best, most positive version of yourself and take a genuine interest in the other party.

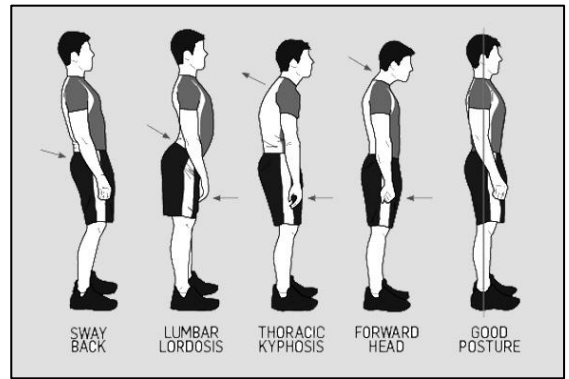
Step 2: Be Memorable

At events specifically for networking, everyone is trying to achieve similar goals; build and gain connections. But with so many people and new interactions it's hard to remember everyone you've met. Your goal should be to leave a stellar first impression, own the conversation, and leave them wanting more when you leave.

- Your first impression starts from across the room.
 - You don't have to wear the fanciest suit but wear clothes that fit, a \$200 tailored suit looks much better than a \$900 suit that doesn't fit. If you look like a million bucks, you'll feel like a million bucks. Guaranteed!
 - Be groomed. Hair, beard, fingernails, deodorant, cologne (not too much) and get yourself put together. Although you may think, "they should LOVE me even if I wear a tank top and sweatpants." Remember, you only get one shot at a first impression, so make it count!
 - Body Language: Do a read of the room and approach others who are open and welcoming with their body positioning. For you, one quick tip for perfect body posture is to visualize yourself standing in a door frame, feet shoulder distance apart, and pretend there's an apple attached to the frame directly above your head. Stand up on your toes, shoulders back and reach like you're trying to take a bite out of the apple and hang by your teeth. Now hold that position, place your feet flat and look forward and BOOM! Picture perfect posture.



- Approach with confidence. Be fearless and don't apologize for asking for help. Practice your perfect smile and remain calm and in charge; almost like you have a secret that everyone wants to know and only you know it. Fidgeting hands and looking like a nervous meerkat is the posture you're trying to avoid.



- Master The Introduction: A smile, a firm handshake, and introduce yourself by name while beaming with positivity.



Once you've entered into a conversation you want your presence to be remembered even after you've left. Be prepared, have insightful and relevant topics to discuss, have your personal branding message ready to go and fine tune your listening skills.

There is a major difference between hearing people speak and actually listening. Rather than waiting for the conversation lull to approach, be ready with interesting subjects so that steer the conversation.

Before heading to a networking event take some time to prepare. Think of ice breaker questions you can use and have your personal pitch ready of who you are/what you do/ & what you're looking for ready to go.

Read recent news and delve into a few key stories from around the world. Spend time prior to the event listening to interesting podcasts, gaining knowledge about random facts that can be brought up at the most opportune moments. For some help you can check out our article on [why you should be listening to Podcasts NOW](#).

If you are able to master the first impression, actively listen to conversation, and gently steer it toward a subject in which you can talk confidently; you'll have wowed your new friends with your networking abilities. And when you've gone off to mingle elsewhere, the group you just left should hopefully be discussing you or the interesting topic you brought up in conversation. By leaving an impression that resonates you're much more likely to be remembered and will have people asking YOU for your card or information.

First Impression Checklist:

- *Stand Up Straight*
- *Make Eye Contact*
- *Smile!*

Step 3: (And the Most Important) Give

Just like High School there is normally a hierarchy among attendees at a networking event. There may be a few CEO's or keynote speakers who are bombarded by young businessmen and women asking for connections, opportunities and looking for their next big break. Your goal is to change the status quo. Think about what you can give to the networking community.



By giving FIRST, you will already stand out from the crowd. Show that you are a team player and display that you are ready to work and feel passionate about success. Throughout the night you may hear people mention certain topics they are interested in, or hobbies they are working on.

Try to remember, or even take notes on the interesting pieces of information you gather throughout the night.

Now you have somewhere to start so that you can give back and begin to help others. If you are able to make connections *for other people* then you will set yourself apart for being a connector and people will want to help you as well.

For example, you're talking to someone and realized they enjoy eating sushi and later in the conversation they mention that they are going on a business trip to San Francisco the following week. When you get home you can send a quick e-mail and provide a recommendation for one of the hottest new sushi places in San Fran.



The best part about being helpful is that you don't need to have travelled there before. Do some research on the internet and provide valuable information that is directly related to something you spoke about at the networking event. This shows that the conversation was meaningful and that you have taken the first steps to building a solid foundation & relationship.

"It's better to give before you receive. And never keep score. If your interactions are ruled by generosity, your rewards will follow suit"

– Keith Ferrazzi, author *Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time*

Step 4: Follow Up

As you grow your network you'll find that you are not only growing your own personal connections, but are now also able to assist in some unlikely scenarios. Because you've now become a networking ninja with a contact book bursting at the seams, you will now be able to be a connector for others that you've met.

Keep track of the people you've met by category. This way when you make a new friend you can cross-reference your network and see if you are able to help make introductions to other influencers for them.

Not only are you helping others but you are able to rekindle contact with some you may not have spoken to in some time. They will be flattered you are making the connection and will feel responsible to ensuring a successful connection and therefore a successful project.



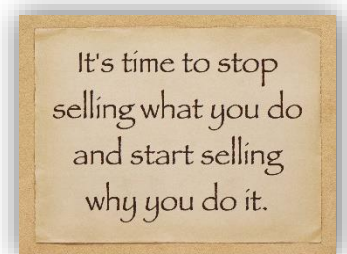
The most important aspect of follow up is actually following up! If you promised to send someone specific information – send it. If you promised an introduction – make it. It only takes a moment to send an email. One introduction can change your, or someone else's, life forever.

Become the master networker/connector by helping others and it will pay you back in spades.

Where do I find these great people?

The sky is the limit when it comes to where you can meet new people. Your networking possibilities are dependent solely on your willingness to step out of your comfort zone and focus on making new relationship.

Depending on your skill set and how comfortable you are in social situations, certain venues may be more beneficial than others. Don't be afraid to diversify and meet people with varying interests, hobbies & professions than your own. Never dismiss anyone as unimportant simply because of their job title. They may have connections that can be extremely valuable to you. Think *people*, not positions.



If you're more introverted, shy, or simply find meeting new people stressful; it's okay to start small. "Starting with a known contact instead of an unknown demystifies the [networking] process and helps get a shy person over the hurdle" says Lynne Sarikas, director of Northeastern University's MBA Career Center.

It's also important to visit the places where you'll find those you're looking to meet. For example if you are looking to work with finance specialists, bankers and lawyers you are most likely going to be in a different location than those looking to build a network of artists, photographer and models.

Know your market and know where they spend their time. Perhaps visit a bar or restaurant that they frequent after work. Discover where they spend their weekends, is it at a country club, art gallery, or park? Become part of their community. Sometimes this takes membership, or dealing with a gatekeeper. Meet the gatekeeper and learn how to get involved.

If you are looking for more general networking possibilities, there are always networking functions that can be found online such as meetup.com, EventBrite, and others. Once you start building your connections, ask others where they would recommend you go to meet more people.



Use your new relationships and build through them. Grow your community and be a positive contributing member.

- Think of each connection as a relationship, not as a business transaction. You will gain more knowledge about them as a person and your connection will grow more naturally.
- Be memorable and others will reach out to you and ask you to be part of their community.
- Give before asking for anything in return. Add value to the relationship to make it meaningful.



When you are able to manage your connections and stay in contact you show that you care and appreciate their help. Building a network is much more than collecting business cards and adding names to a list of people you have met. **Authentic** networking involves time, commitment and a genuine desire to build relationships. By understanding this from the start, you will stand out in a crowd and always have help when you need it.

For more information on how to master networking, build social skills, create a bulletproof first impression and become the very best version of yourself head over to [Life's Secret Sauce](#), sign up to join the community and get our FREE guides on mastering names and learning how to be the most remembered person at the next social event!