

Networking is an invaluable skill to have to enhance both your personal and professional lives. Networking is not about walking into a room and gathering as many business cards as you can. It is about building relationships with others. As an Executive Director of a PSO, some of your many responsibilities include recruiting members, volunteers and sponsors. You will have greater success in your job by networking and expanding the number of people you know. Broaden your circle of contacts and you will see the benefits of building these relationships.

Why Network?

“Networking is the art of building relationships yet it remains an under appreciated leadership skill. In most books on leadership, networking rates hardly a mention, but no business or organization can flourish without the connectors – those people who build and maintain the most important relationships. It all comes down to a simple concept: People do business with those they know and trust.”

Source Darcy Rezac's 88 Positive Networking Tips

How can I increase my networking abilities?

Do you dread receptions, banquets, and other work-related social events? Does attending another open house make you want to run inside your own and lock the door? You're not alone. Many of us are apprehensive about these situations, because most of us either hate entering rooms where we don't know anyone or hate spending time with people we don't know well. Keeping a conversation going during such occasions is an ordeal.

But for professionals, these occasions represent opportunities to develop friendships and broaden networks. Whether you realize it or not, networking happens all the time. During an awkward social gathering, demanding presentation, or a tough interview, small talk can turn a challenging situation into a success. Small talk connects us, whether the setting is **business** or **social**.

Here are a few tips you can use to improve your small-talk skills:

- **Be the first to say hello!**
- **Introduce yourself.** Act as if you're the host and introduce new arrivals to your conversational partner or partners.
- **Smile first and always shake hands when you meet anyone.**
- **Take your time during introductions!** Make an extra effort to remember names, and use them frequently in the conversation.
- **Maintain eye contact in any conversation.** Many people in a group of three or more people look around in the hope that others will maintain eye contact on our behalf. But people don't feel listened to if you're not looking at them.
- **Get somebody to talk** about why they're attending the event, and you are on your way to engaging them in conversation.
- **Show an interest in every person.** The more interest you show the wiser and attractive you become to others.
- **Listen carefully** for information that can keep the conversation going.
- **Remember: People want to be with people who make them feel special,** not people who are "special". Take responsibility to help people you talk to feel as if they're the only person in the room.

- **Play the conversation game.** When someone asks, “How’s business?” and “What’s going on?” Answer with more than “Pretty good” or “Not much”. Tell more about yourself so that others can learn more about you.
- **Don’t act like you’re an FBI agent.** Questions like “What do you do?” “Are you married?”, “Do you have children?”, and “Where are you from?” lead to dead-end conversations.
- **Be aware of body language.** Nervous or ill-at-ease people make others uncomfortable. Act confident and comfortable, even when you’re not.
- **Be prepared.** Spend a few minutes before an anticipated event preparing to talk easily about three topics. They will come in handy when you find yourself in the middle of an awkward moment... or while seated at a table of eight where everyone is playing with their food.
- **Show an interest in your conversational partner’s opinion, too.** You’re not the only person who has opinions about funding the space program or what will happen to the stock market.
- **Stop conversation monopolists in their tracks.** If possible, wait for the person to take a breath or to pause, then break in with a comment about their topic. Immediately redirect the conversation in the direction you wish it to go.
- **Be prepared with exit lines.** You need to move around and meet others.
- **Don’t melt from conversations.** Make a positive impression by shaking hands and saying goodbye as you leave.

Source: <http://www.debrafine.com/art-businessnetworkingskills.html>

What do I say to people I don't know at an event?

A comment related to the group, the event or the venue is what you have in common and a perfect opener. Or "Seems like a lot of traffic. How did you find a good parking place?"

"Is this your first time here?" Source: www.susanroane.com

What happens when you arrive at an event and everyone is in groups talking? How can I get into a conversation?

Pick the noisiest group that is having fun, talking and laughing of 3 or more people. Stand in the periphery. Give agreeable body language (smile, nod, open stance). When someone glances your way, say something, and then your name if that feels appropriate. Then you can step into the conversation. Source: www.susanroane.com

Websites of interest:

www.susanroane.com

www.debrafine.com/index.html

www.michaeljhughes.com

www.frogandprince.com

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