

The Top Ten Rules of Effective Networking

By M. E. Callan

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Many of us are discouraged by the networking events that we go to. We feel swamped by people just looking to get money from us, and we rarely feel as though the event was worth our time.

Yet networking should be one of the best ways to bring in new business. The key is learning to network correctly.

Even those of us who enjoy networking should remember the following tried and true rules of effective networking.

1. Give, then Get.

If you approach a networking meeting with a “what’s in it for me?” attitude, you will be just like all those sharks who have kept you away from networking to begin with. Go to a networking event looking for opportunities to help others. When you give this way, your “get” is always bigger.

2. Please, No Fishing.

Don’t be that person who offers a cold, limp fish as a handshake instead of a firm grip. Loosen it up just a little for shaking a woman’s hand, but always remain firm. Otherwise, the people you meet will remember you not for all the great things you had to offer, but for your weak handshake.

3. Direct Eye Contact.

Don’t ever stare at someone, but always make sure to meet his or her gaze. A person who continuously averts his will be seen as someone with something to hide.

4. Dress Professionally.

The old adage about making a first impression is still true. As a rule of thumb, dress one step above what you think everyone else will be wearing. It can never hurt you to look as good as the next best dressed person in the room.

5. Have a 30 Second Commercial.

Have you ever met someone at a networking event, talked to them about their business the whole night, and left without knowing what in the world they do? It happens all the time. Remember to state clearly what it is that you do and who are looking to work with.

6. Write on Business Cards.

As you meet people, write information about them down on their business cards. It’s virtually impossible to remember all those little details about the people you meet, and no one will mind if you

are so interested in what they have to say that you are taking the time to write it down.

7. Create a Cataloguing System.

As soon as you get back to your office, file your new business cards in an accessible way. Staple business cards to 3x5 cards and then write down all of the pertinent information you can. Include on the 3x5 the name of the person, where and when you met her, what she looks like, and what you talked about. Next time you see her, she will be very impressed that you remembered so many details.

8. Nice Meeting You Cards.

It is never a bad idea to send a new contact a quick card that says "nice meeting you." Include your business card as well in case they have misplaced the one you gave them at the networking event.

9. Follow Up!

This step is crucial. If you have told a contact that you would help them in any way, be sure to follow up immediately. Do this consistently, and you will be seen as a man of his word. Don't follow up on your promises, and you will be seen as unreliable and untruthful.

10. LISTEN.

The number one rule of networking is to listen. In fact, you should only be speaking about 30% of the time. We all love to talk about ourselves, and if you give your contacts the chance to do that they will think quite highly of you without even realizing why.

Following these rules of effective networking should not only make your experiences more enjoyable, but will help you bring in new business leads time and time again.

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