

Networking: Working the Room

Communication Skills & Behaviours of the Best Networkers

Confident; relaxed; genuinely interested in other people; curious; ask questions; active listeners; “present”; engaged; empathetic; interesting – good chat and stories; polite; respectful; appropriate; happy; positive; optimistic; friendly; warm; welcoming; open; inclusive; well dressed and groomed; good at “working the room”; comfortable with small talk; fun; good sense of humour; enthusiastic; energetic; knowledgeable; good body language – posture, gesture, facial expressions, eye contact, voice, handshake; well prepared; focused; perceptive; flexible and adaptable to different situations, people and their various behavioural styles; genuine; sincere; authentic; good at following-up; reliable; persistent – but not pushy; helpful; well connected; good connector; resilient

Top Tips for “Working the Room”

Prepare – do your homework: delegate list; research on Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, notes of previous meetings; any existing clients going?

Advance notifications: consider dropping some emails or making some calls to people on the list who you’ve met before and would like to meet again at the event.

Prepare yourself: fix your attitude; go for a walk/run/shower first; think about how you want to come across to people; get your happy face on.

Be interesting: have something to say – work and non-work; read the papers; what would be interesting & relevant for the people you’re likely to meet?

Be interested – listen: the 80:20 Rule – if possible listen more than you talk; and don’t even think about getting out your ‘phone to check those emails!

Be a source of pleasure: be happy, cheerful, upbeat, optimistic, positive – it’s engaging and infectious and people will want to spend time with you.

Check out the room: think who to approach – individuals – likely to be grateful for the company; avoid couples and groups who seem deep in conversation.

Talk to strangers: it’s a networking event – people expect strangers to talk to them! It’s allowed. They are almost certain not to reject you!

Break into groups: look for looser, more open groups; step up and introduce yourself; it’s a networking event – this is also allowed and expected.

Move on: at networking events you are allowed to leave people and move on; provided when you’re with them you are fully “present”; no need for bar/toilet excuses.

Names: listen, make sure you get their name, if you miss it – ask again, use it (but not so much that it looks like you’ve just done some networking skills training!)

Connect people: look for opportunities to connect contacts before/at/after events if you think they share mutual interests or could be useful to each other.

Setting Expectation for Follow-up

“It’s been [great speaking to you]...you mentioned earlier [x, y, z]...I’d like to/could I...

Connect with you on LinkedIn; send you [something useful]; introduce you to [my colleague...]; invite you to [x event]; meet [your colleague x]; hear more about [y]; pick your brain about [z]; tell you about [something useful]; help you by...; meet you again [could I get 20 minutes of your time?]

What’s the best way to set that up? Should I give you a call, drop you an email with dates, speak to your PA?”

The Morning-after Business Card Test

Be appropriately memorable: what would you like people to think, feel, and remember about you?

Get a sense of personal brand: how would you like them to describe you to their colleagues and contacts?

Be a chameleon: you have to be able to speak to different people in a wide range of situations; and yet...

Be yourself: “because everyone else is taken” (Oscar Wilde) – it has to be natural and authentic.

Listening

Be genuinely interested: people are fascinating; choose to be interested in them.

Listen: with the intention of understanding, not responding.

Give your full attention: be fully present; beware selective listening: listen to everything they say.

Listen actively: eye contact, lean forward, nod, vary facial expressions, repeat back, summarise, reflect back.