

WORK IT BABY... 5 TIPS TO WORK YOUR NETWORKING

Some great networking rules

1. Practice makes polished

Be well prepared for the question “what do you do?” If you’re a bit of an introvert (like me) be a nerd and practice in front of the mirror or with a friend answering this question until you can get it out in 30 seconds or less.

2. Work it

Before you answer “what do you do” have a bit of a think about what you might like someone to say once you’ve said your answer. Do you want them to say “cool” or do you want them to ask questions about it or do you want them to say “I want to use your service”?

3. Card up

Have your business cards at the ready and consider:

- Not having your mobile number on your cards (so you can give it out to people specially and make them feel like a champ)
- Writing a small note on someone’s business card if they tell you a detail that could be important later on like kids’ names, birthdays, favourite drinks.
- Writing a small note on your own card when you give it to someone so that when they go home with their stack of cards they’ve got an even higher chance of remembering you from the bunch.

4. Homework first

Before I work... er walk into any networking situation I like to know, to the best of my ability, who’s going to be in that room. For this event my homework was sending a hand written card prior to the event to the people I knew were going to be there (not always possible) and reading up on their bios. “Mini-stalking” like this gives you something to chat about instantly and avoids those oh so soul shattering silent “I don’t know anyone” moments when you walk into a room, it also kind of makes people feel a little special which is always nice. If you can’t do your homework prior to the night, keep your ears peeled while you’re there for interesting tidbits.

5. Be Different

Whatever you can do to stand out on the night or afterwards (in a professional way: not by Coyote Ugly style dancing on the bar) makes it more likely that your name will be remembered instead of you being “what’s-her-name” I met at “that-thing-that-time”.

And one final tip - for those of you perhaps looking to organise a networking event of your own.

Try to give people something to talk about afterwards.

More rules to consider...

Have you ever walked into a room full of strangers at a networking opportunity thinking: “Goody, a whole room of potential new friends”?

Isn’t this a great potential thought, especially when the more introverted part of you is really thinking: “Goody, they catered this event really well and do you think that anyone will notice if I just stand in the corner, don’t talk to anyone and attack the canapé waitress each time she exits the kitchen?”

Here is a list of some other things you can get into the habit of thinking at a networking event (to overcome some of your perceived weaknesses).

If you're an introvert - challenge yourself by thinking:

"I can stop networking as soon as I've met 15 people and exchanged business cards"

"I can stop networking as soon as I've found out five pieces of personal information about people (children's names, hobbies, company goals) and written them on the backs of those people's business cards"

"I can stop networking as soon as I've got reasons to write 10 hand written cards tomorrow when I get back to work to people I've met here tonight"

If you've got the opposite problem and you know you talk a little (OK a lot) at these sorts of events, challenge yourself by thinking:

"Over 50% of my night tonight will be spent silent" (remember the letters in silent spell listen!)

"I will end every sentence about myself tonight with a question for the person I'm talking to"

"How can I limit my elevator pitch to a fabulous 30 seconds?"

And if you have a problem with being overly fascinated by the munchies and cocktails on offer, rephrase the above goals so that you can eat one piece of food per two business cards exchanged.

Ultimately, what you should think when you walk into a networking situation is:

"How many of these people don't know about my business?" (and will by the end of tonight).

"How many of these people are potential clients?"

"How many of these people know potential clients?"

"Who in the room can I become or refer a client for?" (reciprocity works wonders and the best way to get a referral is to give one!)

"Who in this room has done something I'd like to do" (i.e.: who can I learn from?)

Getting your thoughts straight before you head into the event really helps you clarify your goals for the night and remember; of course you can also go along to an event like this just to have fun. Don't be afraid to forget the strategy for a night (but take business cards just in case)!

Acknowledgement:

This article gleaned from the web site of **Kirsty Dunphey** - *The youngest ever winner of the Australian Telstra Young Business Woman of the Year award, Kirsty started her first business at 15, her own real estate agency at 21, was a self-made millionaire at 23 and a self-made multi-millionaire at 25.*

www.kirstydunphey.com