

11 Effective Networking Strategies

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Effective networking is a good business practice, whether you're a corporate professional or you own your own business. The key to making the most of your professional networking is to keep the right attitude and use a series of techniques to connect with others and expand your circle of influence. Although social networking sites have replaced a lot of face-to-face networking opportunities, these effective networking strategies apply either online or in person.

1. Change the way you think about your contacts.

Your contacts aren't there to provide value for you. You should think about ways that you can provide value for them.

2. Seek to share, not to sell.

People resist sales. But, if you've built up a relationship with someone through sharing, they'll be more likely to spread the word about your services or become a customer.

3. Keep your body language in check.

At face-to-face networking events, you should pay close attention to your body language. Be sure to smile and stand tall to impress others.

4. Go outside of your circle of influence.

The point of networking isn't to get to know people who already know you. The point is to make new contacts and grow your circle. Make sure you're spending time where you need to be.

5. Connect your circle with your new contacts.

It's important to make connections between people you know and people you just met. If you meet someone who would benefit from knowing someone that you know, make the connection.

6. Make yourself memorable.

Find a good way to communicate what you do in a memorable way. Consider your specific range of expertise, and sell yourself with that in mind.

7. Be ready with your business card (or your URL if you're networking online).

You're going to meet a lot of people while networking and, if you want them to contact you again, you'll need to provide them with an easy way to get in touch. Be sure that you have your business card handy at live events, and make sure you create and use a personal Web site.

8. Follow up after an event.

If you really connected with someone, make it a point to follow up with them in the

future. You can send a quick e-mail to follow up on a conversation, or send a thank-you note if the person went above and beyond to help you out.

9. Present yourself well online.

If you use social networking sites, you should carefully monitor the quality of what you post on your profile and what you use as updates. Remember, these sites aren't for fun and games if you want to network professionally.

10. Look for ways to network beyond networking events.

Sometimes the best connections are made when there's no pressure to network. Look for opportunities to connect with others in a more casual atmosphere.

11. Don't be afraid to be yourself.

You'll be a lot more memorable, and more trusting, if you can be yourself. Don't be afraid to let your personality shine.