



Laura's top 10 tips for terrific networking

As a 'natural' networker, I sometimes forget that it doesn't come so easily to everyone. And even born networkers sometimes forget how to make the most of networking opportunities (see #10 for the one I often forget to do!).

To help you make the most of the time you spend at networking events, I have created my own "Top 10" list. Which of these have you already mastered, and which do you need to work on?

1. **Dress for success.** Ensure that what you wear matches the image you wish to project. If you are attending a business function, dress in business attire. A solicitor's attire will probably be more formal than a graphic designer's. When in doubt, dress more formally rather than more casually.
2. **Come prepared.** Bring more business cards than you think you will need. I always try to wear a jacket with pockets. My strategy is to put a supply of my own cards in the right-hand pocket, and place the cards I receive into the left. Keeps it simple!
3. **Name tag on the right side.** This is a great little trick. If you are wearing your name tag on your right side, it makes it simple for someone you meet to glance at your name tag as they are shaking your hand. It's especially good if someone you have met before has forgotten your name — they can sneak a glance as you shake hello!
4. **Smile.** Even if you feel nervous, smile. Remember that while most people don't like networking, everyone likes a good sport. A smile is a

great way to “introduce” yourself to the room as you arrive: even before you have said a word, you have made a good impression.

5. **Adopt an open stance.** Position yourself so that people feel they can approach you. If you are speaking to someone, don’t face them directly — it will look like you are having a private conversation. Face the room and be approachable.
6. **Ditch your colleagues.** The premise behind networking is to extend your network. You don’t achieve anything by chatting to the people you work with.
7. **Be cheerful.** Once you start speaking to someone, keep it light. You may be fuming about something, but a networking event is meant to be light-hearted. Steer clear of controversial subjects, and stick to current affairs and local goings-on.
8. **Don’t say, “So what do you do?”** This gives the impression you are only interested in speaking to someone based on their job. Instead, open with something neutral and friendly. “How’s your week going?” is something everybody can answer, and works as a good opening line. It also allows someone to highlight something they feel may be of interest.
9. **Know when to move on.** Once you have made contact, don’t cling to the person for the duration of the event. You are both there to make new contacts, so allow them — and yourself — to move on with a polite exit strategy. Extend your hand and shake theirs, saying “Good to meet you.” If you haven’t exchanged cards yet, this is the time to do so. Ask them for their card, and offer them yours. And move on.
10. **Tip number 10 is for “Follow up.”** Once you get back to the office, take the stack of cards from your left pocket (you did ask for cards, didn’t you?) and spend a few minutes entering the details into your contact list. Send a short email to say you enjoyed meeting them. You may also want to see if they are on LinkedIn, and if so, send a connection request. If you promised to set up a meeting, now is the time to act on that promise.

There you have it — my handy guide to help you make the most of your networking. Was this list helpful? I’d love to hear. [Drop me a line](#) and let me know. If you feel you need one-to-one help, please ring to discuss.

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