

Networking: The Where And The How



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Networking. Over eighty percent of jobs are filled this way. Yet, most of us don't seem to do a very good job at it. It's all about connecting with people, using your time and their time wisely. Here are some ideas on the best places to network and how to maximize your time.

Where to network:

1. **An industry event or conference not focused on what you do.** Do you have clients in a particular area or have a desire to work in another sector? Exposing yourself to a new area can bring you not only new contacts but knowledge as well.
2. **Happy hours.** You can meet more people in a relaxed atmosphere and it's easier to have a conversation. Generally, people aren't in a rush to leave so it can be the best networking environment.
3. **Non-profit events.** If you have a cause close to your heart, volunteer or attend a special event. You will be starting with something in common and you never know who

you will meet or what you will learn.

How to network:

It's hard to network with a group of friends or co-workers. Solo is the way to go as scary as that may be. Remember:

1. **What are your goals?** Depending on the event, you need a plan. At a large event like a conference, you will need to plan ahead so you meet your goals. Smaller events can be easier as networking is usually before or after. While you should have a plan, try to be flexible. Going to lunch or dinner with a new group of friends may be worth missing the cocktail hour. If it is a new event for you, speak to the organizers. They may be able to help you and/or introduce you to someone you want to meet.
2. **Anyone you know going?** Check the guest list and your network. There may be people you know going or there maybe someone whom you want to meet attending. If so, an email or LinkedIn message could easily set up a conversation at the event.
3. **Work the room.** The bar and food tables are a great place to meet people. Most people will stop there if just to see what's available. What better way to start a conversation than over food!
4. **The basics:** have your elevator pitch ready, move quickly so that you don't take up too much of someone's time. You want to meet as many people as possible.

Once you make the initial contact, following up at a later date is easier. While not everyone will be helpful when you meet them, they might be later on.