

Social Is The New Business: Power Networking 101

Everything You Need To Know To
Make a Great First Impression, Generate
Rapport & Quickly Build Relationships

From
The Secrets of Success Series

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Introduction

These days, you can't afford *not* to network. People don't do business with companies, they do business with people. To have the advantage, you need to establish mutually benefitting relationships based on trust. And trust begins from the moment you meet someone – sometimes even before.

Use these tips, tricks & techniques to become a better and more efficient networker. I promise you, it will not only help you now during these tough times, but also in the future as the economy recovers, because you will be much better positioned for success.

Happy networking!

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Tips 1-25

Attitude, First Impressions & Initial Contact

Before you ever even open your mouth, people will make judgements about you. In fact, some experts estimate that people will make a judgement within the first 3 seconds! You can see why it's worthwhile to practice making your first impression a *great* impression. The old adage is right: you never get a second chance...

1. **Check your attitude.** When you walk into an event, make sure you're in a great mood. I always play a song that pumps me up in my car before I go in. (A great pick-me-up: "Send Me On My Way" by Rusted Root.)
2. **Know your focus before you walk into a networking event.** For example: Who are you trying to meet? Are you trying to collect hundreds of cards? Do you just need to meet ONE perfect prospect? Knowing this in advance will help you focus on your goals as you work your way through the networker.
3. Make eye contact. When first meeting people, making sustained eye contact generates immediate feelings of like and trust. **Try to hold eye contact for a few seconds longer than you're comfortable with**, and watch what happens... It's amazing.
4. **Smile.** It's the quickest and easiest way to put others at ease.
5. **Stand up straight.**
6. **Wear a name tag** if one is offered, and wear it on the *right* side, not the left (it makes it more conspicuous when you shake hands).*

7. If you're standing alone and want to network, **show that you are open** with uncrossed arms and a relaxed smile.
8. Make eye contact as people walk by and **if someone makes slightly longer eye contact**, introduce yourself!
9. A good, firm handshake is essential for BOTH men and women. **Women should never use the dainty "fingertip handshake" in business.**
10. There is **no longer any protocol regarding who extends his or her hand first.**
11. When approaching two people who are talking, **try to wait until their body language indicates they are open to the interruption.** If they are facing each other completely, then they are fully engaged and probably *not* open to interruption. However, **if they open up the angle about 30 degrees**, then you can approach them on the open side.
12. Almost everyone feels out of place and awkward at a networker. You can use this to your advantage by **acting like a host/hostess** and introducing people to each other. People are usually grateful for the help.
13. When introducing people to each other, **use first and last names.**
14. When introducing two people to each other, **clarify if one of them has a specific relationship to you**, for example: "this is my boss, Gordon Gekko," or "my colleague, Bud Fox."
15. When someone you know greets you while you're in a group, **always introduce that person to the group.**
16. When introducing a person to a group, **introduce the individual to the group first**, then the group to the individual: "Michael McManus, I'd like you to meet Sgt. Jeffrey Rabin, my friend Fred Fenster, and my colleague Edie Finneran." Everyone, this is my brother, Michael McManus."
17. When introducing people, **highlight something that each person is, does or has done that might be interesting to the other person.** This sparks conversation and reduces awkwardness. "Veronica Franco, meet my brother Marco Venier who just returned from an exciting trip all around Europe."
18. **Business introductions are usually based on power and hierarchy.** Persons of lesser authority or rank are usually

introduced to persons of greater authority or rank. “Representative Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., meet President Barack Obama.”

19. If there is a very big difference in age, **you can introduce the younger person to the older person** regardless of rank (as if the older person was of higher rank). For example: “Benjamin Braddock, I’d like you to meet my mother, Mrs. Robinson.”
20. Though gender plays little or no role in business etiquette and introductions anymore, **if you’re unsure about who to introduce first, you may revert to a gender-based introduction.** For example: “Marilyn Monroe, I’d like you to meet President John F. Kennedy. President Kennedy this is the actress Marilyn Monroe.” Few will be offended if you do this (well, maybe *one* person wasn’t happy with this introduction...)
21. **Everyone forgets a name now and then.** If it happens to you, it’s best to just apologize and ‘fess up rather than ignore an introduction. You can just say: “I’m so sorry, I keep wanting to call you Penelope because you remind me of my college roommate, Penelope, but I know that’s not your name...” People are usually not offended because it happens to them too!
22. When you do forget a name, **laugh it off but don’t insult yourself,** for example: “must be my Alzheimer’s” (especially if you’re older) or “blame my ADD” (especially if you’re young). These seemingly innocuous statements reinforce stereotypes and plant negative thoughts about your skills or qualifications.
23. **Don’t have both of your hands full.** Keep at least one hand – your right one – free to shake hands.
24. When shaking hands (firmly, of course), **make sure that your palm is perpendicular to the floor.** Palm up is a sign of submission and palm down implies you are dominant. The very nature of a handshake is to connote equality and balance. Make sure that’s what you’re doing.
25. Focus on who you’re speaking with, **don’t let you eyes wander.**

Tips 26 - 70

Etiquette & Establishing Rapport

With new technology come new rules of engagement. And although many may disagree with these rules (usually those who flout them most egregiously), this is the consensus after much research and surveying. Follow these guidelines and you'll be safe. Should you correct someone else if they get it wrong? Absolutely not.

26. **Don't use your handheld (BlackBerry, iPhone) when talking to someone.** The message it sends is: "Anyone who has my email address or my phone number is more important to me than you, even though you are right in front of me."
27. **If you must take a call, excuse yourself first and then do it.** For example: "I'm sorry but I've been waiting for this call all day and I have to take it." Then walk to a quiet, more secluded area to speak.
28. **If you must check your email, ask permission.** Most people wouldn't dream of saying no to this: "Do you mind if I check my email really quick? I've been waiting to hear back about something and it's weighing on my mind."
29. **When talking with a group, distribute eye contact evenly.** It's human nature to focus on people we like, but often we inadvertently focus on one person to the exclusion of others. People notice this – even if only on a subconscious level.

30. If your focus is to sell something, **don't immediately launch into a sales pitch**, LISTEN FIRST. People do business with people they like, so establish trust and rapport first, you can sell later.
31. **Be interested not interesting**. This will naturally engender trust and help you move a relationship to the next level.
32. Develop and **use some introductory stock questions that encourage people to open up and share** and that give clues to whether they're a good contact for you. For example: "What brought you here today?" or "Who are you hoping to meet today?"
33. **Nail down your "Elevator Pitch,"** which is a QUICK response to the question "What do you do?"
34. In your Elevator Pitch, **focus on the benefits (results) you provide rather than the features (process) of your business**. For example, instead of saying: "I'm a divorce lawyer," you could say: "I help people maximize their divorce settlements." Instead of saying: "I design computer systems" (process), you could instead say: "I help companies maximize their IT system's effectiveness while minimizing their glitches and downtime" (results).
35. When describing your business, **try adding a success story** relevant to the person with whom you are speaking.
36. When you communicate, **focus on the value you GIVE**. Says Keith Ferris in Never Eat Alone: "The currency of real networking is not greed but generosity."
37. Don't talk too much. **If you tend to dominate conversations, practice asking questions**.
38. On the flip side, **be careful not to interrogate** by asking rapid-fire questions.
39. To avoid "interrogating," **ask open-ended questions** that require more than a yes or no answer.
40. Don't preach or teach, even if you think it's providing value. Let the relationship develop first, **then bring up any advice or suggestions later**.
41. **Be a "mirror"** – reflect back the substance and feelings being expressed.
42. Remember that **more than half of what you communicate is nonverbal**, and by some estimates it's closer to 80% or 90%! Make sure your body language complements and reinforces the message you want to send.

43. **Let the other party dominate the discussion.**
44. **Be attentive**, interested and alert to what the other person is saying.
45. Don't rehearse in your head what you're going to say while someone else is talking to you. **Try to "be in the moment" and really understand what they're telling you.**
46. When deep in conversation and the other person is speaking, **give nonverbal acknowledgements that you are listening** through head nodding, appropriate facial expressions, open and relaxed body posture, and eye contact.
47. Also **provide brief, acknowledging responses**, for example "Uh-huh," "yes," and "I see."
48. **Provide limited but encouraging responses** that carry the speaker's idea one step forward.
49. If there is a lull in the conversation, **invite the speaker to say more**, for example: "That sounds interesting," or "I'd like to hear more about that."
50. If the conversation takes a negative or emotional turn, **don't discount the speaker's feelings** by using stock phrases like "It's not that bad," "You'll feel better tomorrow," or "Imagine how much worse it could be."
51. **Avoid changing the subject or moving in a completely new direction**, especially if the person you're speaking with is very engaged with the current conversation.
52. **Don't judge!** For example: "I would never..." or "If it had been me, I would never have..."
53. **Offering a tentative interpretation about the other's feelings, desires, or meanings** shows that you're really trying to understand them and builds trust. For example: "Does that mean that you...?" or "You must have been really excited, how did everyone else respond?"
54. Some people prefer to focus on facts and figures, others like concepts or ideas better. Try to determine what type of person you're talking to and **tailor your conversation, message or pitch** to their preferences.
55. **Respond to what someone is saying by rewording** and seeking positive reinforcement that you understood correctly. For example:

“So is what you’re saying that your company merged, or was it more like a takeover?”

56. **Reflect back on content that you’ve perceived through cues.** For example: “It seems like your company is really growing quickly if it’s opening up 10 new locations this month.”
57. Bring together in some way the details the speaker has described, thereby **providing a focus** – especially if that focus is relevant to what you do, or if you can provide value in that arena. For example: “From what you’re saying, it sounds like your company is doing very well – do you think they’d be looking to expand down south?”
58. Don’t be afraid to **ask for clarification** if you didn’t understand something. It’s better than feigning comprehension. “Wait, I don’t think I understood that last part. Did you mean that...?”
59. When drawing conclusions, **find out if your interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate**: “That makes me think that maybe you’re experiencing some problems with your operations and processes, does that sound right?”
60. **Give the other person time to think as well as to talk.**
61. When conversing, especially about what you do, **take care to not speak as if asking a question?** “I’m a business consultant? I help people maximize their sales revenues?” It makes people unsure about your skill and experience. More women seem to do this than men.
62. To check how you sound, **try recording a meeting or a conversation and then play it back later.** Or ask someone you trust to listen in and give you honest feedback.
63. Avoid using qualifiers that belittle what you do. For example, words like “only,” “try” or “just” have no place when you’re describing your business. As in “I just try to help companies with their computer needs,” or “I’m only a part-time teacher.” **Lose the weak words and stick with the rest.**
64. Offer value. Always. **Refocus away from what you need and instead focus on what you provide.**
65. Take care to not “one-up” people. I know it’s difficult when someone tells a story and you have a better one, but at the very least, **let them finish theirs and then offer yours** – with references back to their story to show you were listening. (“I know

how you felt, something similar happened to me once and the experience also made me...”)

66. **Don't interrupt!!!!** And if you do, immediately apologize and ask the person you're talking with to continue (it helps to repeat back the last thing they said: “You were saying...”)
67. **Be quiet.** People are much more likely to reveal important information when they trust that you're really listening.
68. When conversing, **show you're engaged** by leaning forward (not too close, though, people need space!).
69. Keep moving. **Even if you've met someone great, remember that they're there to network too.** Make plans to meet up again if the rapport is strong and the opportunity promising.
70. If you're worried about offending someone by leaving them, a great way to move on is to say: “I've truly enjoyed talking with you and I'd like to pursue this conversation further – **but there are some other people I need to speak with.** May I have your card so I can follow up?”

Tips 71 - 100

Following Up

What's the point of networking if you don't follow up?

71. **Create a consistent system for contact management.**
72. Whether it's paper-based (a rolodex or card holder) or virtual (CardScan, Act!, Constant Contact), **make sure your system is easy and is built around YOUR preferences and style.**
73. **Refer people.** Listen carefully for any opportunities that might arise for others in your network.
74. However, **when you refer, be careful** that you: 1. Recommend only people that you can really vouch for; or at least: 2. Make it clear that you are referring but not necessarily recommending.
75. Network EVERYWHERE. Ski lifts, restaurants, in line, PTA meetings... Anywhere is a good place to meet people. **Practice and become comfortable striking up conversations with strangers.**
76. **Don't discount people** just because you think they are not your target – they may know someone else that could be beneficial to you.
77. **Don't talk only to people you already know** (unless that is your focus).
78. **Bring business cards everywhere!** You never know when you're going to meet someone interesting.

79. Never, ever, run out of business cards.
80. **Don't hold a stack of cards and pass them around to people like a blackjack dealer**, especially if you haven't established any rapport with yet.
81. **Get a card that people won't discard**, either because it is interesting, attractive or provides something of value.
82. **Design-wise, keep your business cards simple and elegant.**
Card scanners are becoming more popular every day, so consider what the software can easily read.
83. **Give your business card near the end of a conversation**, not the beginning. It gives your card much higher value.
84. When you **ask for someone's card**, chances are they'll ask for yours as well. This is a subtle and polite way to initiate a card exchange (better than offering yours unasked).
85. When you receive a card from someone you'd like to pursue a relationship with, **offer to follow up with something of value**: an article, a tips sheet, a special report, a picture, an introduction, an invitation... Anything that's valuable to them.
86. **Always keep a Sharpie with you** so you can write on any business card, even glossy ones. (I like the little keychain ultra-fine-point Sharpies.)
87. When you give your card, **write something on it that is of value** to the person you give it to (i.e., the name of a book you've recommended or a relevant website).
88. **On each card you receive, write notes that will help you remember the person you met.** For example, what they looked like, what they were wearing, where you met, what they need, what you discussed, an interesting detail, something personal, or an action that you promised to take.
89. You can even write notes right in front of them – **people are flattered when you make an effort to remember them.**
90. **Commit to staying** until you have met a predetermined number of people – even if it's only ONE great one!
91. (For those of you who are super organized and disciplined.) Get some notecards with your name & contact info printed on them, pre-stamp them and keep them in your car or your briefcase. When you return from the event, pull out all the business cards and pen a quick note ("Great to meet you, I'm looking forward to

staying in touch”). Drop them in the mail as you leave for work the next day.

92. For an added touch, **add something of value to the note** – or even get it preprinted on the card.
93. If you collect more cards than you can reasonably enter into a contact management system, **invest in a card scanning system** (like CardScan). Before you buy, make sure that it can import and export to and from the other programs you use.
94. **If you’re not computer-savvy, or you’d rather not invest in a card-scanning system, try these alternatives:** 1. Outsource or delegate your input process. 2. Get a binder with sleeves so you can organize your cards by category, priority or date, whatever works for you. Put in only one card per sleeve (rather than doubling up) so that you can read the backs of the cards, including any notes you might have written.
95. Follow through on following up. If you say you’ll contact someone, **do it within one week of meeting.**
96. **Follow up to your contacts on a regular basis.**
97. **If you send out weekly emails or newsletters to your list, focus on providing value** (i.e., offering useful tips or techniques) rather than just sending out “status updates,” discounts or promotions.
98. Generally speaking, sending emails to your list **more than once a week is probably too much**, and you risk saturating your list to the point that people will ignore your name in their inbox.
99. **Don’t send or forward religious, political, sexual or chain emails.**
100. Anyone can hit “forward.” So if you want to forward along something of value to your business contacts (i.e., an invitation, or an interesting article), **distinguish yourself by adding a note at the top, giving your perspective or encouraging people to send back their comments.**

Tip 101

The Most Important Tip of All

101. Above all, **be authentic**. The above techniques are merely guidelines to help you stretch yourself and develop skills. Don't try to be someone you're not, people can sense it – and it defeats the whole purpose of creating relationships.