



Top Tips for Working the Room

(Adapted from: www.BusinessBreakThroughInstitute.com and an article by Jeffrey Horn of Towers Perrin)

Level I – Beginner Preparation

Practice – Networking is a skill to be developed, and not innate

1. Add these things to your daily life
2. Start with “low risk” encounters (during holiday shopping, studying for finals in a library, end of semester dance formals, car-pooling or riding a bus home, etc.)
3. Be more attentive regarding what other people need; whether it be a clerk, another shopper, fellow student or passenger on the bus.
4. Consciously offering common courtesies and showing appreciation.

Before the Event

1. Think about who will be attending. Who do you want to meet. Who can you introduce to whom?
2. Create and practice your self-introduction
3. Bring a stack of business (contact) cards
4. Have some topics to talk about – read a newspaper to be up on current affairs (if Cornell related, read Cornell Chronicle)
5. Turn off your cell phone, or put on vibrate. Do NOT stop a conversation to answer the phone.

In General

6. Arrive early
7. Wear your name tag on the right
8. Avoid off-color humor (or other topics that are not universal, such as politics)
9. Avoid smoking
10. Avoid being loud
11. Avoid complaining
12. Do not sit
13. Avoid excessive food and drink

Introductions

14. Meet more people rather than fewer
15. Focus on introductions and relationships, not selling
16. Be inclusive. Welcome other people into a conversation. If you know both people, make an introduction and if possible, find a commonality between them.

Conversations

17. Look at and encourage the speaker
18. Resist interrupting
19. Spend 85% of time listening (and asking questions about the other person)
20. Try to spend 5 minutes NOT using the word “I”

Remembering Names

21. Repeat the name throughout the conversation (judiciously)
22. Ask for business cards and look at card

Body Language

23. Smile
24. Make and maintain eye contact
25. Speak at a medium pace and clearly
26. Stand up straight
27. Avoid having hands in your pants pockets

Graceful Exit

28. Keep one hand free to shake hands in next interaction
29. Don't be afraid to say, “Excuse me, I see someone I need to say hello to”

Follow-Up

30. Send Thank you notes
31. Follow-up on anything you promised to do (send materials, provide names, set lunch meeting)

Level II – Intermediate Development

Before the Reception

1. Create an action plan of how you are going to “work” the event
2. Set one goal for the event and write it down – make the goal attainable (e.g., meet two individuals and collect two business cards)
3. Get a copy of the attendee list (if possible)
4. If attending with a colleague, strategize how you might mingle, then cross-introduce people

At the Event

5. Position yourself near the door or near the bar
6. Think of yourself more as a host and act accordingly
7. Avoid sizing up name tags
8. Avoid the “sympathy vote” by beginning conversations complaining (about health, weather, employment status, boss, etc.)
9. Carry a half-glass of beverage and order only half a glass to greater facilitate separation

Introductions

10. Initiate handshakes, but respect people’s personal space
11. Be sure you have a brief, effective intro of yourself
12. Look for individuals with “white knuckles.” Although they may be wallflowers, they might be valuable people to spend time with.
13. You may also ask if others know people at the event in your field whom you should meet; and they may point them out to you.

Conversations

14. Use active listening skills
15. Refer back to conversation later in the dialogue – “As you said earlier...”
16. When you enter a group; listen for a minute or two before joining in
17. Focus on being interested vs. being interesting

18. Try to find two things in common with the other person
19. If the individual is not connected to your field, have a pleasant talk, you may still have areas in common and the person may still be a good contact.

Remembering Names

20. Introduce yourself in a way that teaches people your name: “My name is Jim Hanley – it rhymes with manly.”

Business Cards

21. Make notes on the back of a person’s business card (even if it’s later, or excuse yourself and go to a private area. You may also want to bring a notepad and pen that fit in your pocket.)
22. Keep your contact cards in an easy to reach pocket

Body Language

23. Be relaxed
24. Watch when you nod
25. Pause and listen
26. Don’t look over your shoulder
27. Be sensitive to body language

Graceful Exit

28. Spend no more than four to seven minutes, then, move on
29. Excuses include: having to make a phone call; get a drink; go to the restroom; say hello to someone you see

Level III – Advanced Skills

Before the Event

1. Pick one name from the registration list to call. “I noticed you were also attending this conference and I was wondering if you were going to the reception as well. I was hoping to steal a few minutes and meet you to find out more about you and the ABC Company.”
2. Think of several questions in advance: “How would I know if I ran into your ideal client?”
3. If attending with co-workers, share thoughts, strategy, and mental checklist of action items before attending.

At the Event

In General

4. Study clothing, shoes, etc., - you can tell many books by their cover
5. Never sit at an empty table or next to an empty chair
6. Work one-on-one or with small groups
7. Never be critical of anyone at the event
8. Be extra courteous to the staff
9. Volunteer your name
10. Split up with colleagues and circulate
11. When introducing someone, tell a bit about each other
12. Introductions are perfect times to “market” new colleagues

Conversations

13. Ask for interpretations: “What do you mean by ‘often’?”
14. Control your body language
15. Be hypersensitive
16. Ask questions requiring more than a one-word answer
17. Explore comments another makes

Remembering Names

18. Ask the other person their name and then spend time on it, asking the person about self, unusual sounding name, or another aspect of her introduction

19. Give a memorable description of self, and self-deprecating is okay: “I’m the only one here who can’t break 150 on the golf course.”

20. Use notes on business cards to forward articles of interest

Body Language

21. Keep a level head
22. Don’t fidget
23. Use entire physical being to express yourself
24. Don’t respond to distractions
25. Show people what you mean
26. Maintain an approachable expression

Graceful Exit

27. “Well, I don’t want to take up all your time. I’m sure you have other people you want to talk to and so do I. I’d like to continue our conversation, so why don’t we plan to get together? I’ll call you next week.” Then follow-up!
28. Stay in touch