

NETWORKING A ROOM

1. GO TO THE FUNCTION WITH A GOAL IN MIND.

Decide what your networking goals will be for the event. What information or resources are you seeking to help you achieve your goal? Is this a likely event for getting that support? What types of people will be attending such an event? What is the agenda?

2. PRESENT YOURSELF ATTRACTIVELY.

Go confidently. Go prepared. Dress to win. Wear your best colors and an outfit that helps you to feel your best.

3. TAKE YOUR NETWORKING TOOLS.

Take a supply of business cards, a good pen, and a pocket calendar.

4. DECIDE HOW MANY STRONG CONTACTS YOU WANT TO MAKE FOR THE EVENING.

Go for quality of contacts rather than for large numbers. Keep in mind your primary purpose for networking at this event. One or two quality contacts may be a reasonable goal.

5. ENTER THE ROOM, CENTER YOURSELF, AND OBSERVE.

Before getting into conversations with people, take a few seconds to center yourself. Observe the climate of the room. Quickly scan the room, particularly the four corners of the room, where power groups are more likely to form. Mentally decide on one or two people you want to meet.

6. INITIATE A CONVERSATION.

Smile, establish eye contact, extend a handshake, and introduce yourself. The person standing alone will appreciate your rescuing them from a lonely predicament. Initiate a conversation. In his book *Conversationally Speaking*, Alan Garner states that there are three ways in which you can start a conversation: talking about the situation, talking about yourself, and talking about the other person. This can be done through asking questions, voicing an opinion, or stating a fact. So there are nine possible conversation openings, as shown in the table below.

	About the Situation	About Yourself	About the Other Person
Ask a Question			
Voice an Opinion			
State a Fact			

Imagine you are at a conference or similar function. See if you can think of nine conversation starters---one for each square in the table. Write them in the appropriate squares. Then use them!

7. ASK GOOD QUESTIONS AND LISTEN.

Ask no more than one or two key questions at the beginning. Refine your questions. Rather than asking, “Can I pick your brain?” say “I need some advice. Can you help me?” This will generate a more positive response from your contact. Listen carefully to his reply; be willing to hear what he says.

8. CIRCULATE.

Use your discretion as to the amount of time you spend with your contacts at the event. Remember that your goal is to get quality contacts. Be sure to exchange cards as you circulate. At the first opportunity, jot down some interesting points about those persons on the back of their business cards, such as how you met and what you discussed.

9. DON'T GET STUCK.

Don't get drawn into lengthy business discussions at a networking event. Other valuable contacts may be missed. Arrange a follow-up meeting if you want to have a longer discussion. If you find yourself having difficulty in circulation, try these simple strategies: “Here is a person I need to follow up with. Would you care to be introduced?”

10. FOLLOW UP.

Be patient when you network. Networking is like planting seeds. With care the plants come up, but it takes time. Once you've planted the seeds, you need to water them. In networking it's called follow-up. Schedule follow-up times on your calendar. A follow-up can be a call to say, “I'm thinking about you” or “Did you know...?” Or it could be sending your contact a clipping of an interesting article. Clippings of articles will always sit favorably with any network contact. And they help you to appear knowledgeable and informed on ideas and events.