

10 TIPS

FOR SMARTER NETWORKING



The Los Angeles Regional
Small Business
Development Center
Network

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*You've got questions.
We've got answers.*

In the era of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, does in-person networking still matter? You'd better believe it. In fact, a study by the Referral Institute found that on average, businesspeople who spent six to nine hours per week networking generated 50 percent of their business through networking-related referrals. Improve your networking skills by following these 10 tips.

- 1 BREAK THE ICE.** Make small talk easier by wearing something that inspires conversation, like an unusual brooch or scarf, colorful socks or a funny necktie. Not only do these props serve as icebreakers, but they also make you memorable.
- 2 BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS IN ONE SENTENCE.** Avoid buzzwords and jargon; instead, imagine you're telling your mom or a third-grader what your company does. Focus on explaining how your business benefits customers.
- 3 LISTEN MORE THAN YOU TALK.** Good news for the shy networker: Listening can open doors. Ask questions about other people's businesses and they'll be happy to answer, while you gain insight into what they need and how you might be able to work together.
- 4 FOCUS ON QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY.** Networking is not about collecting 1,000 business cards, but about making real connections with people. Focus on what you can give the other person, not what you can get from them, and you'll find that others are eager to help you.
- 5 KEEP MINGLING.** So that you don't spend all your time talking to one person, develop a tactful way of ending conversations. Say something like "It's been great to meet you. I hope you don't mind, but I'd like to talk to a few other people before the event is over. Here's my card; let's stay in touch."
- 6 TAKE A LEADING ROLE.** Don't be a passive attendee; be an active participant. Volunteer to set up before the event, participate in committees or chair panels. You'll increase your visibility and get to know people faster.
- 7 STREAMLINE CONTACT GATHERING.** Apps like CardMunch, Evernote Hello or Shoeboxed make it simple to scan business cards, take notes from your conversations, and integrate the information into your contact management system and social media accounts.
- 8 DEVELOP A FOLLOW-UP PLAN.** Create a system for following up with people you meet at networking events. For example, you could begin by following up on any plans made at the event, then reach out to your new contacts on social media, and eventually suggest meeting for coffee or lunch.
- 9 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.** Schedule time each week to stay in touch with your new contacts by commenting on their social media status; sending them articles or information that might be useful to their business; sending them holiday, birthday and anniversary cards; or getting together.
- 10 DON'T GIVE UP.** Many businesspeople give up on networking without ever investing enough time to make it pay off. Keeping the six-to-nine-hour-per-week figure in

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