



TIPS ON NETWORKING EFFECTIVELY IN A SOCIAL SETTING

The goal of networking at a social event is to find out what is important to other people, make them smile, and exchange business cards. Usually, this does not involve talking extensively about what you do. Be sincere, be interested, and be respectful.

Tips for networking in a social setting:

1. If you don't know other guests, take the time to walk around the room without talking to anyone. Observe the dynamics. Avoid disturbing small groups, consider joining larger groups, but always welcome the opportunity to strike up a conversation with someone who is on their own, like you. The best place to find individuals is in line for food or drink.
2. The best opening line is simply to introduce yourself and ask them what firm they are with; it's blunt but it will crack most any ice. Most people will be grateful to be in conversation and won't care how it got started.
3. The best way to get a business card is to give one. It is appropriate to offer your business card the first time you discuss your work or profession.
4. Always have business cards. If you don't have a company card, print up 'calling cards' with your name and email if nothing else.
5. Don't carry resumes or flyers with you.
6. Tread carefully around sexual topics - or not at all. Even the best conversation on such topics will taint your professional image. Other topics to avoid include politics, social reform, and anything that may elicit an unusually strong opinion.

7. Truth is no excuse for tactlessness. Reserve strong opinions for people who deserve to know what you really think.

8. Be happy and optimistic. Share positive thoughts. If you must express negative opinions, do so only if you are confident that the other person will agree. Never make disparaging remarks about a mutual acquaintance (or anyone). If the other person is becoming negative, switch topics. You don't want to be remembered as the person who only had bad things to say.

9. Don't talk about what you want. Bring the subject around to business, ask the person about their business. If they ask you about your work, be reasonably brief and look for cues to continue. If the person's eyes start to wander, try to end the conversation politely- either the conversation will end or the person will snap back to attention.

10. If you meet someone with whom you want to discuss business in detail, ask them if you could give them a call sometime next week to talk about this or that. Most people will say YES. Unless the conversation has real chemistry, collect your winnings at this point and walk away.

Jim D. Mason, CED
Vice President Technology Initiatives
The State Chamber
330 N.E. 10th
Oklahoma City, Ok 73104-3200
405.235.3669 ext. 225
405.235.3670 Fax
jmason@okstatechamber.com