

Tips for Business Networking

1. Think Broadly to Build Your Network

Typical business networking occurs face-to-face. People you can network with include:

- Relatives and friends
- Past employers
- Mentors/ Advisers
- People sitting next to you on a plane
- People met through volunteering
- People met through professional organizations

Business networking site also exist like [Ryze](#), [PathConnect](#), [Common.net](#), [Ecademy.com](#), [everyonesconnected.com](#), [Knowmentum](#), [Linked In](#), [Open BC](#), [Networking for Professionals](#), and [ZeroDegrees](#).

2. Give to Get

Networking is about giving first, states Andrea Nierenberg, author of *Million Dollar Networking* and *Non-stop Networking*. Look to add value to the conversation or relationship before you start asking for favors.

3. Do Your Homework

Know who you will meet and who you will expect to meet. Know something about the organization. Have some current “small talk” tidbits on hand. Prepare your own introduction.

4. Dress and Act Professionally

People will appraise your visual and behavioral appearance from head to toe. They will observe your demeanor, mannerisms, and body language and even assess your grooming and accessories. It’s better to be over-dressed than under-dressed. Don’t be afraid to ask about the dress code.

Manners count. Write timely thank you notes/emails after you are given a lead, an interview or an introduction.

5. Go with a Goal

Have a clear understanding of what you want and what is possible for each event. Goals can be broad - meet three new people – or more specific – identify people who are interested in my products or services.

6. Reach Out

Don’t network with people you already know. Strive to meet new people even if it makes you move out of your comfort zone. Network with people standing alone.

7. Ask Thought-Provoking Questions

Avoid a barrage of questions. Listen to the person and then tailor your questions to fit the situation, the person and your goals. Be prepared with easy conversation starters as well as business-oriented questions, e.g. "How did you get started?" or "What do you enjoy most about what you do?" or "I'd love to hear your thoughts on the best way for me to..."

8. Listen and Live in the Moment

Be fully present. Be fully aware of the people you interact with. Listen well, respond promptly, maintain eye contact and don't look over their shoulder for a better prospect.

9. Plan an Exit Strategy

Formulate a graceful way to end conversations. Adopt phrases like, "It was great hearing about your business. Now I will give you a chance to chat with someone else." or "I could monopolize your time but you must want to meet others." or "I hope you enjoy the rest of the..." or "Let me introduce you to some other people..."

10. Follow-up

Do what you committed to do during your networking conversation. Write a follow-up letter or thank-you note. Find value-added ways to stay in contact (referrals, send articles of interest, etc.).

Sue Tinnish is a professional speaker, facilitator and trainer. She is active in the meeting profession as a member of MPI-Chicago Area Chapter and PCMA. She is a past president of MPI (2004-05), a current MPI-CAC Mentor, a MPI International Platinum Speaker and a participant in MPI International's Peer to Peer Assistance program. She loves to travel, bike, and push her own comfort zone (examples include parachuting out of airplanes, experimenting with technology, taking fencing lessons). You can continue to network with Sue through email (sue@suetinnish.com), by subscribing to her e-newsletter, *Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events*, (go to www.suetinnish.com to subscribe) or even picking up the phone (847.394.9857)!