



NETWORKING 101

By Jennifer Syrnyk

Many people, especially students, have trouble or experience anxiety when attending networking events. These anxieties often stem from lack of knowledge of how to progress through the event successfully, leveraging each connection appropriately, while simultaneously showing off one's best self. It is generally known that between 75 to 85 per cent of job vacancies are never publicly posted and secured through relationship building and networking. To make the most out of any social situation, specifically networking events, we summarized some of the top tips on how to network and make a positive and lasting professional impression.

Do

- ✓ **Dress smart.** What you wear matters. Make it neat, always clean and remember to use an iron!
- ✓ **Practice a good handshake.** This says a lot about a person. Firm but NOT bone breaking. Avoid the *dead fish* shake and always make eye contact.
- ✓ **Remember to bring your business cards if you have them.** This is a quick way to provide someone with your contact information, and allow him or her to connect you with others. One can purchase business cards online or at an office supplies store.
- ✓ **Give your undivided attention.** Be wary of your wandering eye, and if you find yourself distracted, position yourself with your back to the distraction (e.g. the door, your friends).
- ✓ **Mind your body language.** Be aware of any fidgeting or nervous habits. Smile, maintain eye contact and be relaxed. Remember to breathe.
- ✓ **Prepare and remember your Personal Summary.** This would be the answer to "...and what do you do?" Be prepared to give an enthusiastic answer that sticks.
- ✓ **Listen more than talking.** There is a good chance you are speaking with someone more experienced than you are, allow him or her to speak to their experiences first. People enjoy speaking about their company so ask questions.
- ✓ **Allow for give and take.** Look for what you can do for others first. Think of what you can offer without expecting in return, and when someone gives you a tip or lead, be a gracious receiver and say "thank you".
- ✓ **Keep track and follow up with your new connections.** Call or email contacts periodically to find out how they are doing without having a further agenda except to keep in touch.
- ✓ **Look for things you have in common.** This makes the rest of the conversation much easier.
- ✓ **Do make a conscious effort to remember names.** This will be beneficial if you need to introduce them to someone else. A good way to make a name *stick* is to say the name shortly after hearing it.
- ✓ **Obtain a business card at the end of your conversation.** Write additional details on the back after and transfer to a spreadsheet at home.

Don't

- × **Approach a networking event as a sales opportunity.** Networking establishes commonalities and likability and is not a single transaction process. Pushing too hard discourages further relationship building and possible future opportunities with that person.
- × **Don't start conversations by giving out your business card.** This often shows that you are inauthentic and are more interested in a quick sell than investing the time and effort.
- × **Don't monopolize one person, and don't try to meet everyone.** Networking is not a numbers game. Your goal is to be strategic and authentic. Having five meaningful contacts is better than having 15 trivial ones.
- × **Speak in any slang or colloquialisms.** Even if you feel you have a great connection with someone, it is never appropriate in the professional world.