

Networking Top Tips

Networking is important and useful to everyone - we know the many reasons why: it helps to unite our often disparate community; it enables us to meet new collaborators; it can open doorways to paid work and stops us feeling isolated. Yet the fear and dread that the prospect of a networking event brings can cripple even the most confident of people.

So how do you network and make the best of events such as our 'Would Like to Meet...'? Here are our top tips:

- Practice describing yourself and what you do in 30 seconds; your 'elevator pitch' is a good way to make a strong first impression.
- When meeting someone new for the first time try to smile, and introduce yourself clearly and confidently.
- Ask your new connection about themselves. Good networking is a two way process – listen and share equally.
- Use positive language without boasting and avoid self-depreciation even if used humorously, at least until you know each other better.
- Be yourself and try to connect on a personal level. Your new contact is unlikely to become your new best friend straight away, but working with people who are friendly and polite is much more desirable.
- If you're approaching a group of people, check their body language before joining in. If they're having a personal or deep conversation maybe come back to them later.
- Ending a conversation at events like 'Would Like to Meet...' can be done by politely saying you're off to meet more fascinating people and thanking them for their time.
- If your conversation has resulted in an action, do it as soon as possible! Once you've ended the conversation (see above), maybe write a little note to jog your memory after the event.
- Have a social presence for new connections to look you up on after they've met you. Anything from LinkedIn to Twitter to a full website provides an opportunity to build on the conversation you've started in person.
- Leave a business card with your contact details and take any offered.
- Don't place unnecessary pressure on yourself to secure new work or cement a new connection immediately, and avoid tying yourself to particular goals for the event. The more open and flexible you are the more easily and naturally conversation will flow. Networking is part of an ongoing process of nurturing relationships; it may be months or years later that you see the fruits of a five minute interaction.