

Networking can be tough, especially if you are not prepared for it or in the mood. Here are some ideas to get you in the mood and increase your personal successes.

1. SMILE!! The fastest way to make any other person feel at ease is to smile. When you walk into a room and are smiling, you are attracting anyone you make eye contact with.

2. Think positively about who you are and why you are there. You have heard of Descartes' philosophy, "I think therefore I am." Nothing could be truer! You will perform and be recognized as the person you are portraying.

3. Identify What you want to have happen. What do you really want to have happen? Picture it in your mind. How would you need to act in order for that picture to be a reality? Then do it. Create a clear understanding of what you want to accomplish and act as though you are already doing it.

4. Create a strategy of building rapport with others. Express interest in the other person. This is the fastest and most reliable way of building rapport. To help you do this, follow the "FORM" technique. First ask about the person's "F"= family, then inquire about his/her "O" = occupation. Next, invite more information about the person's forms of "R"= recreation, what do they like to do, when they are not working? And finally, if you have built up enough rapport, ask about "M"= money. I don't mean run up ask some one how much they made last year. But ask questions concerning money and and their relation between, "F" = family, "O" = occupation, "R" = recreation. More than likely, you will not close a business deal the first time you meet someone. The key is building rapport and trust. Learn about the person you are talking to before talking about yourself. Show interest and follow up with sincere questions. Additionally, don't breach the next letter in the "FORM" formula if a person is not at ease. For example, don't move on to "M"= if the person is not at ease talking to you about his/her recreational habits. Setting a person at ease is the key!

5. Manage your time. Talking with existing friends can happen before or after the networking event. Treat the networking time as a time to discover and connect with new relationships.

6. Exchange cards and arrange to meet at another time to discuss each person's business. Now is not the time to "sell" someone. It is all about gathering information and providing information about you to build rapport. Remember, networking time is for meeting new people, not for sales presentations or stories about personal difficulties. If it is helpful, keep a set of index cards with you and right down the info about the person as you are speaking to them (or right after) that way you can right down details, ideas, and thoughts you had about the conversation/person.

7. Be respectful. Avoid talking during when someone else is. Try not to interrupt or speak over another person - even if you have a better suggestion, story, question, comment, etc.

8. If possible, make the event a team activity. Invite others from your organization to join you at the event to maximize coverage, especially with large audiences. Your team will appreciate meeting people, too.

9. Be involved - Volunteer. We all know that 1% of work from a 100 people is far better than 100% from 1 person. So help out, "chip -in". It won't be time consuming if you assist someone else. In fact, if your mission is to receive, then learn to give. This is a great opportunity for others to learn about who you are verses what you say you are.

10. Above everything else, Have Fun!! If you aren't having fun, neither is the person next to you!

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Bring Your Business Cards if you have them...