

Realscreen Magazine recently asked me to write a short article on how to network effectively. Here is what they published in their 2008 Sept/Oct issue. I thought you might find it interesting.

HOW TO NETWORK EFFECTIVELY

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Networking is about building relationships and trust. It is an essential skill for professionals who want to grow their careers. Making new business friends can lead to fresh ideas, useful information, new partnerships and increased income. To improve your networking skills, try these ten suggestions:

1. **Seek long-term connections, not short-term gains.** Networking is about being authentic, unselfish, genuine and honest. The key to successful networking is to be a decent and honorable person even when you're not networking.
2. **Act with confidence even if you feel shy and intimidated.** You may feel understandably self-conscious and uncomfortable when meeting people more powerful and successful than yourself, but successful networking requires you to do it anyway. Do your best to appear self-confident. Try and ignore any negative self-talk.
3. **Reach out to people in a warm and sincere way.** Risk rejection. Be friendly and generous. Smile, shake hands firmly, make eye contact and ask them open-ended questions (questions which require more than a yes or no). Resist the urge to dominate the conversation. Listen intently. Be present. Focus on their concerns, not yours. Learn their name and use it so you begin to associate the name with the face.
4. **At meetings or conferences, go out of your way to meet people.** Physically move around and work the room. Don't get stuck talking to one person just to be polite. (Say to the person, "I enjoyed meeting you and learning about your work. Let's both meet some of the other people here. I hope to run into you again later," shake hands and leave.) Show genuine interest in everyone you meet and form relationships that are meaningful. Exchange business cards. Find out about other people's interests and concerns.
5. **Become a resource to others.** Introduce new friends to old friends. Look for ways you can help other people make useful contacts. Put in a good word for others. Build a reputation as an unselfish, decent person, the sort of person that others want to work with. Treat everyone with respect and courtesy, especially those less powerful than you.
6. **Before attending a conference, think strategically about your goals.** What specific results do you want to achieve? Write them down and have a game plan. Make a list of who you want to meet. Write or call them ahead of time to schedule a meeting. Prepare specific questions and offers of assistance.

7. **At conferences, don't compare yourself to others.** Don't waste time and energy fretting over someone else who may be having more success at networking than you. We all go through up and downs. Just concentrate on being the best you can be.
8. **When you talk about your work, talk passionately.** Prepare a one minute description of what you do or want to do so that you are ready to talk in a succinct, enthusiastic and inspiring way about your work and ideas.
9. **Take good notes and soak up as much learning as you can.** Be a sponge. Write down all the inspiring ideas and information you gather so you don't forget them.
10. **After meeting an interesting person, send him/her a thank you note.** Suggest ways you might be able to help. Fulfill any promises you made. Show people that you actually do what you say you're going to do.

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