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The Art of Networking

Networking. We all have a love-hate relationship with it. Whether you're trying to find a new job, move up in your career or make friends – being part of a valuable network of connections can bring a plethora of resources to meet your goal.

In today's highly competitive and fast-moving world it takes more than just shaking hands and introducing yourself to a stranger. These 5 essential tips will help you tackle the world of networking to get you collaborating in no time.

1. Put your name out there

It takes more than just a business card for someone to remember your name or even the name of your business. And many people are now turning to social media and digital networking platforms like LinkedIn as a virtual 'business card', instead of physically carrying them around.

A good way to ensure that everyone remembers the name of your brand is to make it part of the networking event. Add it to the event's marketing material by getting bags and [lanyards printed](#). Encourage team members to wear these during the event so your name is seen at all times. [IGO Promo](#) has some great ideas. They'll help your business stand out from the rest and can be used to carry badges, key fobs, mobile phones and even USB drives.

2. Make yourself memorable

Saying something out loud ensures that you're [more likely](#) to remember it. This is a popular learning technique for students to help them remember important notes and you can use

this trick to make yourself memorable while networking. Repeat not only what people tell you, but share unforgettable stories that others will want to repeat over and over again too.

Funny anecdotes about yourself, your industry and your work that engage your listener will secure you in their memory. Share important information to tease the person into wanting to find out more. This way you'll have a reason to keep in touch.

3. Showcase your personality

Personality is key in making yourself memorable and building meaningful connections. Be yourself as much as you can. If you have trouble connecting with people, there's no harm in sharing a few personal stories in order to build a bond. People are smarter than you think and most will see right through you if you're putting on a show.

Be authentic, and if you're passionate about what you're saying it will definitely shine through. The people who connect with your authentic self are the ones who will last the longest in your network. These will be the people you can depend on and get valuable insight from.

4. Be a good listener

In order to strike up a meaningful conversation, you need to be a good listener. Networking is a two-way street and as much as you want to show off your strengths, the other person wants to do the same. Ask questions and listen to what people have to say. You may need something from them, but there may be plenty of opportunities for you to help them too.

If you're short on time it can be difficult to convey what you want about yourself, while leaving sufficient time to learn about others. Watch for signs that someone is not interested in what you have to say and immediately turn the focus of the conversation to them.

Take notes and develop a follow-up plan so you have something to work on and keep the connection alive. Say you will send them the information they are looking for or make plans to attend the next event together.

5. Do your research

Networking is not about quick gains. It's about establishing meaningful connections that add value to your life for the long term. Research the networking event in advance to find out who exactly will be attending, what the agenda is and what value you can bring to it.

Choose events wisely instead of blindly attending every single one. You are investing your time, energy and effort into networking so it needs to be worth it. If you are looking forward to speaking to someone in particular, do a bit of digging to find topics to talk about and shared interests. Don't force or lie your way into getting into their good books, it won't last very long.

It's time to network your own way

These networking tips are a great way to get you motivated, but may not work for everyone. It is important to mingle and socialise in a way that comes naturally to you. Otherwise, the relationships you make will not last and not reap the benefits you want.

Stick to tackling small groups at a time if you are shy or nervous. Introverts will usually have to fake their way through most conversations. But when you find the right person to talk about what you're passionate about, you'll be bound to make long-lasting and valuable relationships with them.