

Relationship Rules and Tools: 5 Tips on “Working the Room”

Even though I am generally an outgoing guy, the most challenging marketing event for me was the dreaded “open reception/happy hour.” I have been to dozens of these events and, through trial and error, have greatly reduced the stress and anxiety associated with them by following 5 simple techniques:

1. Research

If it is a planned function, obtain the invite list and see if there will be someone there you know or clients of your firm with representatives you have not met. Gather as much information as you can on the event.

2. Host

Act like a host rather than a guest and/or get the actual host to introduce you to people you want to meet or people they suggest you meet.

3. Seek Out Singles

Hone in on people who are by themselves. They are probably reluctant to introduce themselves and will welcome your company. I have met the most amazing people this way. I generally don't interpose into established groups/conversations unless invited. I find it rude and uncomfortable.

4. Ask & Listen

Once engaged ask two questions: “Tell me about you and your company.” And “What can I do to help you and/or your company?” (Important – emphasize business or personal help not legal help). It is vitally important to listen and develop a non-business relationship with the person from the outset. Remember, God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason.

5. Collect Cards

Some people advise that you get as many cards as possible. I believe in collecting 3-5 “quality” cards from the people with whom you spent significant time, rather than collecting 10-20 cards randomly from people you can't remember or recognize an hour after the event. The night, or day, after the event, follow up with a nice email which shows sincere interest and add them to your network.

Of course, there are many other great techniques for “working the room.” I have found, with great success, that these are the easiest to implement and, better yet, remember.