

# 10 Steps to High Impact Networking

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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## (Part 2 of 2)

In our first installment of **10 Steps to High Impact Networking**, we examined the first five mandates to effective networking. What follows are some additional thoughts as well as a list of behaviors which should be avoided.

1. **Always Wear a Name Tag – on the “Right” Side.** This is a crucial step because it's the easiest way to make introductions, get noticed and be more approachable. People want to know who you are and what firm you represent. A name tag helps them ask you questions and remember your name later. Be sure to place the name tag on your RIGHT lapel so it is easily visible when shaking hands (not many people consciously do this, but it's important). As women, we must plan ahead regarding wardrobe choices on event day. You will need to either wear a blazer or have some type of lapel for the name tag to clip or pin to.
2. **Fly Solo.** Meeting new people is stressful and difficult for many folks. Attending a networking event with a friend or colleague makes it less likely that you will make the effort to meet someone new unless you agree to separate once you've arrived at the event. It is important to step outside your comfort zone by not hanging out with people you already know. To meet up periodically to make introductions to others is an effective way to use the buddy system. Otherwise, you should go it alone.
3. **It is better to be *Interested than Interesting*.** Though there are occasions when it is appropriate to be the “life of the party”, business networking events is not the place. To take steps to develop new clients, you want to focus in on qualified prospects and learn as much as you can about their business, their challenges, and how you may be able to help them. None of this may be accomplished if you are doing most of the talking. The general rule is that if you are talking more than 10% of the time with a new contact, it is too much and you are not learning. You want to spend your time listening to the other person talk about herself/her company, and concentrating on asking specific, open-ended questions in an effort to learn as much as possible. The focus should be on cultivating a relationship and to create a reason to call or write them to schedule a follow-up meeting or lunch.
4. **Exit Strategy.** As a general rule, you should not spend more than 5-7 minutes with each person you meet. Even more reason to be prepared and strategic in your networking approach. Everyone attending is doing the same thing, so it's best to keep moving. Having said that, it can sometimes be awkward separating and moving on. Here are a few tips:
  - Excuse yourself to make a phone call.
  - Excuse yourself to refresh your beverage.
  - Introduce your party to the host or someone you know.
  - Do not excuse yourself to “go to the bathroom.”

In his article “Top 100 Tips for Working a Room,” Jeffrey Horn suggests an easy strategy to follow may look something like this:

“Well, I don't want to take up too much of your time. I am sure you have other people you would like to speak with, as do I. I would like to continue our conversation so let's plan to get together. I'll give you a call next week.” Simple and direct.

5. **Follow up. Follow up. Follow up.** This is why you attend networking events – to extend the connection and cultivate meaningful relationships. From your conversations, figure out the best way to follow up with a contact and do so within 3 days after the event.

One of the forms of follow up which deliver “high impact” is with the handwritten note on personal stationery. In the era of quick-and-easy email, a handwritten note packs a punch. The act of taking the time to write a note creates enormous impact, and it's the kind of impact you want to create in your business development efforts and new relationships.

The note does not need to be long but only to iterate how good it was to meet and chat with the individual, and extend the offer to help her in her business in whatever way you can.

The note may be followed up by a phone call or invitation to meet. Be sure to add new connections to your prospect sheet/contact list.

It is crucial to stay on your prospects' radar and it typically takes 7-10 encounters or “touches” for someone to really remember you for something. (this is a topic for another article).

Nevertheless, it is important to remember the “WIIFM” rule when you do follow up. This stands for “what’s in it for me”? Everyone needs something in their personal and professional life. Hone in on what kind of help a contact needs and find a way to provide it to them, in some small way. You may start simply by passing along the name of someone who can provide a service which they need, like a great financial planner, for example. You want to make the impression that you are helpful and genuinely care for others.

Reaching to the other end of the spectrum, below are a few things you should **never** do in networking situations:

- Look over your networking partner's shoulder or around the room as you are speaking to him/her.
- Sit or stand next to friends or colleagues at an event, if at all possible.
- Focus on the food/beverage. Business events are not about the food/drinks but instead about cultivating relationships.
- Forget or place your business cards in “hard to reach” places.
- Neglect to introduce someone to the person with whom you are presently speaking.
- Eat/drink difficult food/beverages (i.e. garlic, broccoli, spinach, popcorn, coffee, etc.).