



# THE ULTIMATE NETWORKING GUIDE

## 30+ TIPS TO BUILD YOUR INNER CIRCLE

- 1. BE PATIENT.** Networking is a marathon, not a sprint. Relationships are an investment that takes time.
- 2. THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM.** Walking into an event/lunch/coffee meeting, etc... that's already packed is intimidating. Arriving early increases your chance of meeting more people in a less rowdy setting, as they arrive and at a slower pace so you can warm up.
- 3. EVERYONE IS KING (OR QUEEN).** Do not be a snob, you never know who people know. Be respectful, kind and interested in everyone.
- 4. BEING INTERESTED IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEING INTERESTING.** Listen to others with sincerity and look them in the eye. On the other hand, don't be so reserved that you are forcing the other party to do all of the talking.
- 5. AVOID LONERS** and wallflowers at events.
- 6. NEVER NETWORK WITH AN IMMEDIATE NEED OR REQUEST.** Desperation is a major turn-off.
- 7. DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH CONFIDENCE** to see and be seen? If not, work on yourself.
- 8. DO YOU LIKE THE WAY YOU LOOK?** If not, work on yourself.
- 9. DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING INTERESTING TO TALK ABOUT?** If not, prepare in advance-what are the headlines or latest industry news? Be an interesting person if your goal is to attract interesting people.
- 10. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?** What are your strengths, skills, talents, connections? What do you bring to the table? Have your mental list ready before your networking event.
- 11. ENTER WITH THE EVENT WITH GRACE:** Here are a list of 10 great conversation starters (use the most appropriate for the situation):
  - Hi, may I join you? I'm (your name – extend your hand to shake). How did you hear about this event?
  - Hi, I'm (your name – extend your hand to shake). How are you?
  - Hi, I'm (your name – extend your hand to shake). Did you graduate from / Do you work at/ Do you know the host?
  - Hi, I really like your blouse (or shirt, tie, necklace, handbag)
  - Did you have as hard of a time finding this venue as I did?
  - Find the food table and comment "Everything looks good – what have you tried / what are you thinking?"
  - Hi, I'm (your name – extend your hand to shake). What did you think of so-and-so's speech?
  - Hi, I'm (your name – extend your hand to shake). You all look like you're having a great time here, mind if I join in?
- 12. RECOGNIZE** when others are not including you or are being otherwise disinterested or rude. Do not force that situation – it is their loss and not personal. Move on!
- 13. CHALLENGE YOURSELF** to consistently speak with a certain number of people (try lucky number 7) at each event and stick to that number, no matter what.



- 14. ON THE OTHER HAND, DON'T WORK THE ROOM.** The objective is not to be a social butterfly, or to “love ’em and leave ’em “ so to speak. Make time for quality connections, exchange cards or information when natural and excuse yourself, very politely and graciously, with a “I hope you don’t mind if I follow-up with you, I’d like to chat more,” after a reasonable period of quality conversation, and continue to circulate calmly.
- 15. ANOTHER EXIT ROUTE:** “Well, I think it’s time for me to head out/wind down. I really enjoyed chatting with you and would like to keep in touch. May I have your card (and offer them yours)?”
- 16. ANOTHER WAY TO EXIT WITH GRACE:** “It looks like a good time to grab a bite now, please excuse me – it was great meeting you.”
- 17. IF YOU SIMPLY NEED TO REGROUP, HEAD FOR THE RESTROOM** (and you know where it is because you arrived early and scoped the place out). NEVER find yourself standing alone or loitering near the bar / food. You’re there to work!
- 18. FIND A NEW NETWORKING STREAM.** Try an activity, class or organization that has nothing to do with your experience or industry – you are opening up an entirely new social / networking circle for yourself.
- 19. BE PREPARED:** Do you have a business or calling card?
- 20. BE PREPARED:** Do you have a mature, professional email address (work or non-work)?
- 21. NETWORKING IS A WEEDING OUT PROCESS.** In our experience, for every 30 people encountered, 1 might be worth following up with. Don’t get discouraged by expending significant time, energy and resources for networking activities with modest returns. Even among those who are specifically gathered to “network” you will be surprised by how many folks are removed, disinterested, boring, inept, unprofessional, and just plain silly. This is normal. Keep going.
- 22. REMEMBER THAT THINGS DON’T HAPPEN, THINGS ARE MADE TO HAPPEN.** Networking is a proactive endeavor that requires energy, forethought and patience balanced with assertiveness and professionalism.
- 23. THE POINT OF NETWORKING IS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** with those who share a common interest. If conversation about something, anything, does not happen naturally and after a reasonable period of time, move on.
- 24. YOU HAVE TO BE SEEN.** You have to get out. Join professional associations, community organizations. Join a board or committee. You may have to put in some volunteer time and/or donate some money. Make sure the organizations / roles are high quality – the highest you can get.
- 25. LEAD, DON’T FOLLOW.** If you manage to exchange contact information, don’t wait for the other party to follow up. Send a follow-up email within one week of meeting and ask for coffee or lunch in about 2 -3 weeks’ time. Make sure you have something to say. Do your best to contribute to an interesting and respectful conversation. You are building a relationship – don’t be disappointed if it falls flat – bonding takes time. Don’t ask for anything and don’t try too hard. You are only planting the seeds to have support in the future.



- 26. BE A GOOD LISTENER AND BE GENEROUS.** If, during your communications, you see an opportunity to provide information, insight, assistance or an introduction to another person who can help your new contact – do and do it without expectation of return. A decent contact will always remember your generosity and be more likely to lend a hand when you need one. You are building bridges!
- 27. KEEP SMILING.** Happy people are attractive people, meaning people will be drawn to you.
- 28. AVOID PAID NETWORKING EVENTS.** You can create opportunities yourself at no to little cost.
- 29. PUT YOUR DEVICES AWAY.** Constantly checking your email or voicemail screams “look at me, I’m so busy and important, I don’t even have time to network.” Major turn –off.
- 30. RECON THE CROWD AT AN EVENT.** If you have an idea of who will be attending, take the time to do some recon. You at least know who’s hosting, right? Start there and gather enough information to start a relevant, interesting and genuine conversation with the host, who should be gracious enough to introduce you to others.
- 31. TAKE YOUR TIME AT AN EVENT.** Avoid the frantic, methodical approach that you are sure to see the less informed take when networking. Breathe, enjoy the event! Laugh, have fun. You are working the room but you are also human. Relax!
- 32. WHEN YOU GET A BUSINESS CARD,** take the time to write a note on the back about the particulars of the interaction – you will forget the next day, when you are (hopefully) looking at a pile of cards. When you follow-up, you want to make sure you have enough information to add a personal and genuine note.

- 33. APPROACH NETWORKING WITH THE SAME SENSE OF DUTY THAT YOU HAVE FOR YOUR JOB.** Networking is a job; be consistent, plan ahead. Book yourself 2-3 months in advance for events and activities where you are sure to meet new people.
- 34. NETWORK AT LEAST 3 TIMES EACH MONTH.** Yes, it can be exhausting because you do have a day job. Again, networking is work but it will become a fun habit as you pick up new friends and associates along the way. Be seen and great things will happen!

Do you know how to Net-Work it? Try the interactive networking map at [WorkReign.com](http://WorkReign.com).

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