



How to Work a Room

Practical Hints and tips to help you on your management journey

Managers are keen to focus on networking in 2011, says new research. So what are the key does and don'ts?

A good networking event can open up a whole host of opportunities for you and your organisation. Your job is to find them. But how? Business-social events are a potential minefield. How do you strike a balance between working a room and being polite? When does networking stray into socialising? And, does it matter?

Here are 5 key networking tips:

1. Play to your strengths. Choose an approach that suits you. If you're naturally sociable, use that to your benefit. Pick which of the three effective networking types you are nearest to and work towards being the best of that class.
2. Be brief about your business. A friend, who when asked what he did for a living, spent scores of words and a number of minutes explaining it. I suggested he simply said transport consultant and he found that easier. So, did the people he met.
3. Make your publicity material shine. Business cards are like a shop window. If they are tatty, unclear or poorly designed, then you are unlikely to get many customers. Similarly, if you insist on giving people handouts, make sure they are brief, clear, uncluttered and attention-grabbing.
4. Be selective. If you attended every event going, you'd never have time for anything else. All events are not created equal, so choose the best ones and be honest about whether you are likely to get any benefit from them.
5. Listen to others. Remember that networking events are as much about hearing from others as them hearing from you. Don't be afraid to keep quiet at times – you might pick up nuggets from others that can help your organisation.

What kind of networker are you?

GOOD

1. CAT You have clear cut goals. You quickly identify those people who can serve your needs and develop immediate relationships with them, while avoiding wasting time on others.
2. LABRADOR You are naturally sociable and friendly, but unsystematic. You may be unaware of the scale of your contact base and the potential benefits that it has to your organisation. But your innate warmth means people take well to you.
3. ORANGUTAN You are considered and strategic, but look to develop relationships for long-term benefits rather than short-term fixes.

BAD

1. HOMING PIGEON You avoid meeting new people and tend to stick with your own colleagues.
2. RABBIT You're a nervous type who, when faced with unfamiliar groups, feels uncomfortable – and makes it obvious.
3. PIG You're married to the buffet table. It's almost impossible to chat to you as your moat is usually full.
4. LIMPET You locate a friendly face and, once you have struck up a conversation, remain with that person all evening.

5. BUTTERFLY You flit about from person to person to such an extent that no-one ever gets to know you.

So, make an impression. To work that room and make the most of those business cards, check out the advice at www.managers.org.uk/managementdirect For more information on the Chartered Management Institute in Northern Ireland contact Stanley Wallace by calling +44 (0)28 90730166 (landline) or +44(0)78 4128 7128 (mobile). You can email him at Stanley.Wallace@MANAGERS.ORG.UK