



Find people
who need you

Networking effectively and strategically

The following are experience-tested tips to help you make the most of the networking opportunities that events provide.

Be strategic

Attend events where your target audience will be. Only choose events that provide you with the opportunity to meet 'people of influence' – people who have the power and influence to give you business.

Preparation before the event

- ♦ **Find out who's going to be there.** Ask the organizers to share the attendee list with you. They likely don't get asked this very much. If they don't share it with you before the event, ask to see it at the event when you arrive and register. Identify ahead of time those people you want to meet. Ask the people at the registration desk if they know/can introduce you to specific people.
- ♦ **Know what you want to learn about them.** Think about who is going to be there and prepare your questions for them ahead of time. What do you want to know about them? What questions can you ask that will help with your market research?

Mingling (when you arrive, at breaks etc.)

If networking is new to you, and you are still a little apprehensive about meeting people in a large/group setting, here are a few tactics guaranteed to ease you into it.

- ♦ **Think of yourself as a host.** When you entertain people in your own home, you introduce them to each other and put them at ease – try this approach.
- ♦ **Look for people who are standing alone** – they are likely just as uncomfortable about networking as you are. Join them and start a conversation.
- ♦ **Meet the presenters and/or organizers** of the event so you can expand your resource and knowledge network. These people are likely very connected and may be able to introduce you to people of influence. They may also be able to provide you with opportunities to present at future events to raise your profile.

The conversation

- ♦ First become an expert in the art of *active listening*.
- ♦ It's simple. Just ask questions. Open-ended questions. Start with the ones you prepared in advance.
- ♦ And when you ask, listen to the response.
- ♦ Use the response to ask the next question and so on.
- ♦ When you ask questions, you control the conversation. It becomes an effective way of gathering information so you don't end up wasting time with the 'wrong' person.

- ◆ Find out everything you can about them, don't talk about yourself and how great you and your firm are.
- ◆ Communication is 90% listening. And remember practicing law and offering or selling your services starts with being able to find the need. You can't find the need if you are talking about yourself.
- ◆ And, by asking them the right questions, you will do more to impress them than with any possible answer you might give them.
- ◆ One of the best questions to start with is "**What brings you here today?**" You'll be amazed at how much more information you'll learn by asking this question rather than "What do you do?"

The exit

- ◆ When **you do not want to/intend to follow up** with the person:
 - ◆ Hand them your business card.
 - ◆ Say "It was a pleasure speaking with you - enjoy the conference." (You may not see a need to stay in touch, but you never know down the road they might see a need for you.)
- ◆ When **you do want to follow up** with the person:
 - ◆ Hand them your business card.
 - ◆ Say "It was a pleasure speaking with you; I'd like to be in touch to continue our conversation. When's a good time to follow up with you?" (use the 24 hour rule when following up).

The organizers

- ◆ Meet them.
- ◆ Thank them for the event.
- ◆ Ask them if they know specific people you want to meet and ask them to introduce you.
- ◆ Exchange cards.
- ◆ Follow up if you said you would.

Following up after the event

- ◆ As soon as you can after the event, take each business card that you collected, and use the back to write down something you learned about that person. This ensures you remember the conversation and that you can use it in your follow up communication.
- ◆ Prioritize the business cards according to your 'ideal client profile'.
- ◆ The key to any follow up is to do what you said you were going to do. So, for those contacts you said you'd be in touch with, make sure you are within 24-48 hours. Send an email or call them and request a meeting to continue the conversation you started at the event.
- ◆ Add the contact to your list.

If there is a seminar/presentation component:

Ask a question

- ◆ Research the presenters and the topics. Be prepared about the topics.
- ◆ Prepare at least one question for each session. The question should address the topic and link to a current or future issue with a client. Introduce yourself first. Use your judgment as to how many questions you ask during the entire event.
- ◆ Give yourself a 30 second infomercial at every event by doing your homework and preparing an intelligent question that relates to the topic of discussion and speaks about something that you are doing to help your clients.
- ◆ Introduce your question with your name and your brand (see next page for tips on introducing yourself).
- ◆ It will show everyone in that room that you care about your clients enough to attend these events.
- ◆ This will help you build your profile by getting your name and your firm name out there.
- ◆ Everyone in that audience will know who you are.
- ◆ Over time this becomes very powerful when they see and hear from you at every event.
- ◆ You'll start to have people come up to you following the event. They'll be coming to you. You won't have to 'fish' for them.

Choosing your seat

- ◆ **Sit at a table where you do not know anyone** and introduce yourself with your business card. This is often done quickly because the event is about to start. Use a segue piece that's comfortable for you, i.e. "We're going to be related to each other for this morning's session - I thought it would be a good idea to know who I'm related to".
- ◆ When others reciprocate, you'll know immediately who you should be talking to first. This works regardless of which table you choose.
- ◆ Review the cards and prioritize who you want to speak with at the first break.

The speakers

- ◆ Meet them.
- ◆ Get their card. And give them yours.
- ◆ Share an 'a-ha' or a learning moment from their session with them. Or thank them. (you are building your resource network)
- ◆ Follow up if you said you would.