



# NETWORKING

There are multiple networking opportunities during trade shows to build or consolidate business relationships. The social functions are prime opportunities, as well as breakfast or a quick catch-up in the hotel lobby before the show, or even walking around the trade show floor. Network with new contacts, re-establish or build on existing contacts and most importantly, improve perceptions and awareness of your product.

## UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF NETWORKING AND SETTING YOUR GOALS

To make the most of networking, know your goals, such as getting to know people, asking questions, sharing information about your product, building new relationships and further developing existing relationships. Quality is more important than quantity. Keep in mind that it's important for you to return the good will by giving referrals as well. Supporting and encouraging other businesses may facilitate referrals back to you and provide opportunities for synergies.

## IDENTIFY KEY PEOPLE

The more prepared you are the better your outcomes will be. Create a list of 'official' and 'non official' events and then look at the program for further free times for networking opportunities. Next, create a list of the key people you want to meet with. Get in touch with as many delegates as possible prior to the event, communicating that you are looking forward to catching up with them. Making contact ahead of the event can be a great 'ice-breaker' and can set the right tone for the face-to-face meetings.

## WHAT SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?

- Business cards
- A notepad and pen for names, addresses and notes (or your electronic device)
- Appointment schedule (don't miss a scheduling opportunity)

Don't be afraid to take a few notes when networking, it shows that you are professional and interested in their business. Just be careful about protocols and customs, for example, writing on the back of business cards is not a professional approach and can be offensive to some cultures.

## PREPARE A LIST OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

By having a pre-prepared list of questions, you will avoid awkward silences and ensure that you gain the right information and outcomes. Don't be too scripted, be natural and prepared with some ideas for discussion. Focus on open-ended questions to ensure the continued flow of conversation.

## PREPARE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Have your elevator pitch ready. Share the highlights of who you are and what your company and products are about. You should be able to do this quickly, and your listener should walk away with good information and a desire to know more. The key to a successful 'elevator pitch' is to focus on your compelling selling points that make you stand out.

- Your pitch should take no longer than 30 to 60 seconds or be no more than a couple of sentences.
- Use language that everyone understands, avoid fancy words or jargon.
- Tell a story and make it entertaining.
- Aim your pitch at a specific audience.
- If you have a few diverse target markets, you might want to develop a unique pitch for each.
- Have a clear goal in mind of what you want to achieve.
- Have a hook at the beginning - something that attracts their attention and makes them want to know more.
- Briefly describe your product but do not go into great detail.
- Explain the benefit your product gives to people – why they love your experience.
- Be passionate. This is your business, be proud to promote it!

At the end of your pitch, ask for something. Ask for their business card, to schedule a meeting or to send them information.

## BE PREPARED AND SHOW UP ON TIME

Whether the event is an industry conference, trade show, seminar, or social function, the first people to show up feel awkward. This is the best time to break the ice and get to know others. As more people arrive they will gravitate to you because you already have a crowd.

## MAKE THE CONNECTIONS

It is often the easier path to talk to people you already know or fellow colleagues. It takes just a few seconds of courage to introduce yourself to a stranger – just be yourself. Remember to be confident, not overpowering, and use your elevator pitch and pre-set questions.

Be proactive in approaching people and be selective in who you talk to. Personal connections are important – be genuine, show interest, ask questions, take notice and follow up. You know what is great about your product, so show enthusiasm when telling others about it. Ensure you engage in relevant conversations.

## IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY...

Remember that you are personally representing your product at networking events. Therefore, not only consider what you say, but consider how you act and your body language. Let your fun and friendly personality shine, smile when you approach a new contact and look for opportunities to share a laugh.

## CONNECT

Make sure you join and partake in the conversations via the social networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Secure social network connections that you can continue to foster after the trade show.

## FOLLOW UP IS JUST AS IMPORTANT

Make notes straight away about whom you've met and where you've met them. Those notes will not only make it easier for you to follow up, but by mentioning details of your conversation or the environment you met in, you will be remembered more easily. Undertake a timely follow up, keep in touch and always send what you promised.

