

Enhance Your Business with Connections

Nine Tips to Organize for a Networking Event



Most businesswomen spend hundreds or even thousands of dollars on networking events, and then fail to prepare sufficiently before the event, or follow-up in a timely manner afterwards. The “fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants” approach costs both money and lost opportunities. The following tips will prevent the disappointment that comes from investing time and energy and getting lackluster results. Whether you are going to a once-a-month breakfast or a four-day conference, follow the rules below for a less stressful, more productive time.

1. Keep a briefcase with all your marketing materials stocked and ready to take to the event. That saves time and stress when you are ready to go out the door. This includes business cards, brochures, and any marketing specialty items you want to give out. Take more than you think you will need. It's much better to carry extra weight than to come up short.

2. Remember to bring a pen. As you receive the cards from others, write anything you want to remember about them on the back of the card. This saves a lot of wondering: “who is this person and why do I have their card?” Note more detail than you think you need. Memory can be a poor networking tool.

3. Get some small manila envelopes and put them in your briefcase. After the event, put all the cards you received in an envelope and put the name and date of the event on the outside. Restock your envelope supply on a regular basis.

4. After the event, replace all of the marketing materials that were given out. Put the envelope at your workstation so you will be able to enter the cards you received into your database and contact your new networking partners within a few days. When you are

done, file the envelope in the networking section of your filing system.

5. Lay your clothes out the night before to avoid last minute surprises in the form of a stain on your blouse or a missing button. If you are going to a conference or convention lay all your clothes out before you pack. Also lay out all the gadgets and electronic devices you want to bring, and make sure they all work. Charge your cell phone, and your laptop battery. Use a checklist to make sure you have everything.

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6. Go through all of your marketing materials every six months to make sure they are up to date and properly convey the current message of your company. Make sure your headshot is current, and throw away any outdated or damaged materials.

7. Take the time to plan your networking strategies and tactics. Think about which events you plan on attending and why. The reason for attending may not be a direct increase in business, but you should know what the reason is. You may just enjoy the fellowship at certain groups, while others may have current members you want to add to your network. You may attend your trade association meeting mostly to keep on top of new developments. Knowing why you want to attend is especially important when it comes to conventions and trade shows that require a large investment

of time and money.

8. Don't overlook web-based networking opportunities. Create a profile in a Microsoft Word document and cut and paste it into the proper places for your on-line profiles. Don't forget to update as needed.

9. Plan your time to get there early. Take five minutes before entering to ground yourself. Do a short heart meditation. Park a little farther away so you can walk a bit. Then smile and enjoy the event, knowing that you have done everything possible for success.

Networking can be fun when you are relaxed and well organized. These tips will allow you to relax and put your best foot forward.

By Annabel Ascher

Annabel Ascher of Creating Order has had a knack for organizing people and data since she was very young. The middle child in a large unruly family, she was often called upon to organize both the time and the space in her environment. Now it is her business!

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