

20 Tips For Navigating a Networking Event

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Two out of three people get a job through networking.

Most job seekers spend the majority of their time scouring online postings and blasting their resume to job boards. Ask any hiring manager or recruiter where they find most of their candidates, and most likely they will say through a referral or a recommendation.

Since networking is the key to getting your dream job, you need to make sure you know the rules of the game for networking events.

Sure, you may be intimidated by the ubiquitous evening networking event. You spend the evening at a swanky bar or restaurant, and you enter a huge room filled with people you don't know. It may seem scary, but everyone in that room is there because they want to network and talk with people just like you.

Here are a few, quick tips to ensure you have a successful networking event:

1. Do your prep work and know what type of people will be in attendance.
2. Read the news so you can be up-to-speed on current events and potential conversation topics.
3. Make note of who the event organizers are so you can thank them at the event. (Usually they are the most connected people in the room).
4. Dress the part. Make note of the venue and expected attire.
5. Think of about five conversation starters or opening lines. It doesn't have to be deep – weather, sports, local news, reasons for being there, etc.
6. Arrive on time. You can meet the organizers and work a smaller crowd.
7. Focus on the people, not the food. It's difficult to shake hands and continue conversations when your hands and mouth are always full.
8. Drink in moderation. No one wants to hear you slur your story about your job search over your fifth glass of pinot.
9. Position yourself in a high traffic area.
10. Be assertive. "Hello, my name is..." Introduce yourself and start conversations.

- 11.** Say something after your name to help lead the conversation. “Hi, I’m Courtney, I’m new to YPC. Are you a YPC member?”
- 12.** Try not to talk with the same two people the whole night. Sure, it’s more comfortable, but you can follow up with those two over coffee another day.
- 13.** To keep the conversation going, focus on things you both know about - the guest speaker, the networking event, or the organization hosting the program.
- 14.** Listen and ask questions. Remember, it’s not all about you.
- 15.** Hand out your business card to those you shared a conversation with, but don’t fling them out like flyers.
- 16.** Request a business card from those you would like to follow up with.
- 17.** Bring a wingman if you’re intimidated; just don’t spend the entire evening chatting with your friend.
- 18.** Tell the event planners thanks and that you enjoyed the event.
- 19.** Jot down notes on the business cards to keep track of everyone you meet.
- 20.** Follow up! After the event, get connected on LinkedIn, and send a personal email to request a meeting to continue conversations.

Remember, you simply are meeting people, making connections, and creating relationships. A quality network is a crucial part of your job search.