

How to Make Networking More Fun!

AWIS Networking Social, June 16, 2008

Did you Know? 93% of us consider ourselves to be shy¹
And. . . A party with strangers is #1 social fear according to a study on social anxiety reported in the N.Y. Times. In a recent study, it was #2 in the phobia chart. (#1 phobia? – fear of spiders)¹

Definitions

“Working a Room” – the ability to circulate comfortably and graciously through a gathering of people: meeting, greeting and talking with as many of them as you wish;; creating communication that is warm and sincere; establishing an honest rapport on which you can build a professional or personal relationship; and knowing how to start, how to continue , and how to end lively and interesting conversations.¹

“Charm” – a combination of warmth, good nature, positive attitude, a good sense of humor, charisma, spirit, energy, and an interest in others. It is the ability to convey a type of caring that comes from the heart and soul. It’s the ability to make people of all walks of life feel comfortable.¹

“Chutzpah” – the courage to converse¹

The combination (of charm and chutzpah) – MAGIC!

HINT: watch those who seem to have these skills – and emulate them¹

What’s Going On Inside of us? Negative Self Talk¹

“I’ve had trouble meeting people – it’s just the way I am”

“I can’t make – and don’t like – small talk”

“I don’t have anything interesting to say”

“I’ll just embarrass myself – it’s better to keep quiet”

or here’s more examples, added by Doris Davis, the speaker. . .

“It’s such a long drive and I have so much to do!”

“I don’t think I’ll meet anyone”

“I don’t think I’ll know anyone there”

Take the above statements – write them down – and then flip them positive¹

“I’m having fun practicing meeting people and I’m getting better at it all the time!”

“I’m enjoying mastering a new skill!”

“Small talk is a great way to get to know people!”

“I want to extend my self to other people and know that the most valuable thing I have to offer is myself!”

“It’s a drive that I can manage – and the outcome will be worth it!”

“I’ll meet at least a few new people”

“I may not know anyone but I WILL MEET people”

¹RoAne, Susan. *How To Work a Room - Your Essential Guide to Savvy Socializing*. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

Tips:

- Evaluate where is your heart and your head before the networking event
 - Have a positive attitude
 - Are you going to have fun? (or do you have a lot on your mind?)
 - Be aware of the first impression people will have of you
- Be early – to scope out the room – tell yourself “I feel empowered because I know where everything is” (and you get to select who you want to talk to as they come in the room!)
- Never be more than 15 min. late
- Bring a buddy – introduce your buddy to others – but split up on occasion
- Name tag on the right
- Avoid approaching groups of 2 people – go for 3 or more who look like they are having fun “Do you mind if I join in?”
- Practice some openers before leaving for the event
 - (have 3 – 5 interesting stories in mind beforehand)
- Enunciate clearly – always say your name
 - (don’t make people struggle with how to repeat it)
 - (pay attention if the receiver understood you)
- Listen with your ears, your face, and with your heart (be “in the moment”)
- Circulate (8 – 10 min. with each person)
- When you see someone who wants to break in your circle – allow that to happen
 - (they will remember your kindness)
- Be approachable (be aware of your body language)
 - (e.g. smile, good eye contact, body posture)
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Follow-up after the event (and not months later)
(the above list was composed from information in Susan RoAne’s book – How to Work a Room and from my own thoughts – Doris E. Davis)

If you have forgotten a name

- say so, with humor (most people will respond in kind)
- always state your name when greeting another person
- repeat the name of the person you just met

Eight Steps¹

- Adopt a positive attitude
- Dress appropriately
- Focus on the benefits of the event
- Plan your self-introduction
- Check your business cards
- Prepare your Small Talk
- Remember to make eye contact and smile
- Practice your handshake

¹RoAne, Susan. *How To Work a Room - Your Essential Guide to Savvy Socializing*. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

What NOT to do . . .

- be unprepared
- have uninviting body language
- control conversations
- complain, brag
- one-upmanship, interrupt, not listen
- offer unsolicited feedback

Conversation Starters

- talk about the organization or cause
- discuss the venue
- mention the view
- discuss the food (presentation, taste, etc) – no whining!
- respond with a question (e.g. oh? where was it held?)
 - Keep it upbeat
 - Ask questions that are relevant (not personal) (see below)

Examples of questions (or “openers”) (remember to say it with a smile)

- “This is my first meeting – how about you?”
- “How are you this evening?”
- “How long have you been a member of AWIS?”
- “Have you been active in AWIS for a long time?”
- “What do you see as the benefit of being involved in AWIS?”
- “How do you think I could get more involved in the organization?”

Generic openers

- “Did you hear about _____ (a current news event)?”
- “Have you had a chance to sample the food?”
- “I really like your jacket (or necklace, or scarf, etc)”
- “Did you encounter much traffic getting here?”
- “How do you know the host? (or hostess)”

How to extricate yourself from a conversation

Wait till you have finished a comment – then “___ (name) - it was a pleasure to meet you. I want to give you the opportunity to mingle and I’d like to do the same. Perhaps we will meet up again this evening. If you’ll excuse me, I’d like to mingle with the other guests.”

“It was a pleasure to meet you. I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening. Unfortunately, I have to excuse myself.”

“Thank you for introducing yourself. I would like to make sure I meet other interesting people tonight and give you that opportunity as well. Perhaps we’ll run into each other later this evening.”

Tidbits:

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When you focus on other people's comfort more than your own, your self-consciousness disappears.¹

Volunteering to be on the greeting committee of your organization is one way to meet everyone who comes in the door. You'll feel more comfortable extending yourself to others because it is your job. You'll feel like the host.¹

(JUST A THOUGHT: Wouldn't it be fun if this role was alternated every AWIS meeting – so people could get practice at it? Volunteer now!
(maybe a good ratio would be 1 greeter per 8 – 10 attendees) (D. Davis)

Before you leave for the event, have a planned and practiced self-introduction that is clear, interesting and well delivered.¹

Your Self-introduction should be tailored to the event.¹

A good introduction includes your name and something about yourself that establishes what you have in common with other people at the event. (7 – 9 seconds)¹

Give the *benefit* of what you do *rather than* your *job title*¹ (e.g., I audit clinical trials – another way of saying this is “I keep investigators giving investigational drugs off of 60 Minutes”)

Networking with the purpose of finding a new opportunity

- Keep in mind all of the information in this handout
- Have your elevator speech prepared – make it interesting, funny, and easy to remember
- Always have a business card (do NOT write on a piece of paper!)
- Ask if you can follow up (and if so, when and how?)
- If the person you are talking to will be submitting your name to the person who could potentially be your next boss, ask him/her if he/she know this boss' management style, retention, etc – be careful not to “grill” too hard!
- Don't appear desperate! (be gracious, and have a businesslike manner)
- Ask if you can name drop the person's name to the person you are supposed to contact (getting permission is important!)
- Be prepared for the question “why do you want to leave your current job?”
- Be aware that behind-the-scenes reference checks happen!
- Do your research (about the company & the opportunity) before following up
- Think through why you think you are best suited for the opportunity
- Where are your strengths? Are you able to state them with confidence?
- Don't say anything that can backfire!
- Be careful – you never know who knows who on this planet (the new boss might be friends with the old boss!)

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