

Tricks for Networking with Groups of People You Don't Know!

Hi All,

Figured I would ask here. I am going to a Holiday Party in 2 hours. The party is being sponsored by several technology groups here in my State, so there is a good potential that some of those in attendance will need my legal services. I am NOT going to know 95% of the people there.

So, what are some tricks of meeting people you don't know in such a setting? Thanks!

Yeah, I'm going to one given by funeral directors. Wheeeeeee!!

Ellen Victor, New York

Representation of funeral homes is a niche practice. An acquaintance of mine practices in that area.

Craig A. Stokes, Texas

There's a good tip here:

<http://lifehacker.com/how-i-became-the-kind-of-person-who-can-work-a-room-1467569726>

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

As cliché as it sounds, just be yourself. Don't bore people by only talking about work and sounding like a one-trick pony. I actually grew into a pretty decent networker after I decided to stop networking. Now I talk about whatever I feel like talking about and I think that makes me more interesting (because I'm talking about my real interests) approachable and memorable.

Fareeda Brewington, Pennsylvania

For me, the one trick that has worked best isn't really a trick--or if you think of it as a trick or technique, it won't work. It comes straight from Dale Carnegie: take a genuine interest in the person you are talking to and find out about their job, their likes, their dislikes, etc. Fact is, people love to talk about themselves, and if you show yourself to be a good listener--really *listening*, not just waiting for your next opportunity to talk about yourself or making polite conversation--you will be able to talk to just about anybody.

Kevin W. Grierson

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I also always use the drink or food line as an opportunity to talk to the person in front of or behind me. I always feel more comfortable after having one easy conversation with someone I didn't know before the event.

Mary Wenzel, Not an Attorney, California

As an elder attorney who does Medicaid planning, one way for people to legally spend their money is on pre-need funeral plans. So, I do a lot of referral business to these guys. And, they're not a bunch of stiff.

Sorry, I just had to.

Ellen Victor

Be the opposite of shy. The person standing next to you, sitting next to you, standing alone so you can walk up to them, sitting in a group at a table with an empty chair - all of these people are vulnerable to having you just walk up and say Hi, I'm Jane Doe.

You can add Can I sit with you folks for a few minutes? when you go up to a little group. Then comes Where you from/what connection brings you here/what do you do? You make the conversation be all about them. Usually they'll ask about you at some point, and then you answer, but you keep it short - your elevator speech. If somebody's interested, they'll ask more. If they ask for a card, have it ready, but don't pass out cards unless asked (and your card should say what kind of law you do). Then you move on to the next person. It's fun and easy if you can be the opposite of shy.

Rebecca K. Wiess, Washington

And pay attention to the looks you get (sometimes a puzzled one) when they realize that you are not waiting for a break to talk about yourself.

Craig McLaughlin, California

2 of the best tips I've heard:

1. Pretend you're host. This gets you in a mindset of going up to the person standing by himself in the corner and talking to him
2. Don't work the room. Try to talk in depth to a couple of people, at most

Patrick W. Begos, California

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Great tip I recently heard: Talk to someone in each corner of the room. That way, you've made a circuit, and you've met 4 new people.

Betsy Brazy, California

It may be too late for you today, but you may want to check out <http://www.rainmakervt.com>. I reviewed Rainmaker VT for TechnoLawyer a while back and I thought the coaching tutorials on networking and other marketing topics were useful. It leads you through a little role-playing game for different scenarios and goes over the best way to handle each situation and gives a reason for why the answers are right or wrong. I was wrong a lot! The advice is best suited for a business lawyer, but some of the lessons, like the one on networking, are more broadly applicable, and they put a lot of thought into the strategy of how you should do things.

Yours truly,

Chandra M. Lewnau, Wasington

I second Kevin's point. Read Dale Carnegie's book. It is essential reading. I was terrible with people but it is a skill you can develop.

As far as tips, just listen to people. I am bad with names so I keep using someone's name when I first meet them. But generally, ask follow up questions and see what you have in common. At parties, people expect to be approached and tend to float. When someone approaches your twosome, introduce yourself and person you were talking with along with a short summary of what you were talking about. Once you get a few people together, you seem like the guy who knows people so you have an easier time.

William Chuang, New York

I always struggle with events like this where I don't know very many people. It makes me anxious and I feel pretty awkward. BUT, I've spend this year committing myself to going to at least one such event per month. While I wouldn't say I enjoy these events, I feel a lot more comfortable. I just wrote an article on Navigating Conferences for the Introverted Lawyer<<http://goo.gl/58I5As>>. Hope it's useful.

Jeena Cho

"Hi, I'm Eric Stratton, Rush Chairman. Damn glad to meet you."

Steve O'Donnell, Pennsylvania

Another plug for Dale Carnegie's how to make friends and influence people. it speaks from a simpler time but the messages are timeless.

i like to use a simple list in mind and am never at a loss for keeping a conversation going even with the most tight lipped people. if you can't riff off of these, then just say nice to meet you and move on. always ask for a card, be willing to exchange cards, but i prefer to take an email address than offer mine without any reciprocation.

location - ie where are you from?

relation- ie. how do you know the host - do you know anyone else here?

vocation - ie. what do you do?

recreation - ie. what do you like to do in your time off?

vacation - ie when was the last time you got away/where?

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Peter Turai, New Jersey

I'm way late to the party here. But, the best approach is to just try to get to know people and figure out how you can connect others. Don't worry about finding people who need YOU. Instead, try to connect others. Find a plumber who really needs an accountant, and an accountant who really needs an IT person. And, so on.

Obviously, if someone needs your stuff, then tell them how you can help.

It's a good idea to introduce yourself to the event host. It might be a good idea to ask the host if he or she has any recommendations about who you should meet. Just relax and be yourself. There shouldn't be a "networking version" of you. At a networking event, be the same person you are the rest of the day. Be a giver. Get to know people and make connections.

Avoid the "elevator speech" or any other form of rehearsed speech. My favorite response to the "what do you do?" question is to ask "You know how

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some people get _____ and they need _____?" They'll say yes, and then I say, "Well, I'm the guy they call to do that."

That works better, because you're triggering their memory and they'll think about people who need you. Ask for the business card at the END of the conversation. It works great to say, "you know, it's been great meeting you. I'd love to chat again some time. Can I get your card?" I use a similar thing on the phone - "Hey, before I let you go, can I ask one more question?"

It's a graceful way to end the conversation and move on.

Cheers,

David Allen Hiersekorn, California

Nothing more fetching than a chance to help a stranded stranger. Pick group of several. Butt in. "I'd like to intro myself. I don't know anyone here.

I'm an lawyer from

*Everyone knows that wallflower feeling and will welcome the chance to help.

John Page, Florida
