

Are You Making the Most of Networking Opportunities? Use This Checklist

Networking isn't an event; it's a process that encompasses what you do before, during and after an event. Do you have some networking events coming up on your calendar? Use this simple checklist to make sure that you get the most out of your efforts.

Before the Event

- Investigate who will attend the event.
- Have specific objectives for each event.
- Learn the dress code in advance.
- Review your value offering for the attendees.
- Prepare provocative questions and conversation topics in advance.
- Have all the business cards and supplies you need.
- Schedule arrival within 15 minutes of start time.

During the Event

- Leave your phone or set it to silent.
- Greet the host(s) and/or organizers.
- Act as an unofficial greeter/staff person.
- Eat and drink moderately, if at all.
- Converse briefly and listen more than you talk.
- Offer value and request permission to follow up.
- Focus on the person you're speaking to without scanning the room for others.

Networking Checklist (Continued)

After the Event

- Debrief immediately after the event.
- Promptly follow up with the key contacts.
- Provide the value you promised.
- Follow up and request a meeting.
- Connect as appropriate with social media (LinkedIn, etc.)
- Stay in touch and periodically send value.
- Ask for referrals.

Want to dramatically improve your networking skills? Use the checklist above as a quiz to evaluate your current performance with each stage of networking. Are you strong in all three areas? Identify where you have room to improve and work to get better. Use this checklist as a simple reminder to help you maximize your return on investment with your future networking activities.