

Work on your network

You can be the best in the business, but you're not going to be successful if no one knows who you are. Networking is a powerful marketing tool, but it doesn't come naturally to everyone. Some of us are too shy to walk into a roomful of strangers, while others don't know how to strike up a conversation. **Terri Cooper**, owner of Terri Cooper Networking Events, explains how to transform yourself from a nervous wreck to a network queen



1. Smile

If you are nervous about approaching strangers at networking events, make it easier for others to approach you. Happy, smiling people attract people.

2. Wear a name badge

Not only does it make you look more professional, but it helps others to remember your name. If you have a name tag made with your branding, it also assists your marketing and advertising and makes your brand more memorable.

3. Always offer a business card

Some people don't hand out business cards unless someone asks for one. Other people don't ask for a business card, believing the person should offer one. See the problem? Always offer a business card and use it as a conversation starter.

4. Stand where people are likely to congregate, like the bar or trade display

It's so much easier to make conversation with someone who is already standing beside you waiting for a drink or browsing a display table.

You have an array of conversation topics in front of you – all you need to do is take the first step.

5. Ask people about themselves and their business

Show a genuine interest in others. You will learn about their business and it will help you understand who could be good contacts for the future. The more you know about someone's business, the more it helps you understand how your business could help them.

6. Ask open-ended questions

Don't ask questions that can be answered with yes or no.

For example, "Did you have a good holiday?" should become "How did you spend your holiday?"

It is a far more inviting and personal approach.

And it's also much more likely to initiate a conversation.

The value of networking

- A referral generates 80 per cent more results than a cold call.
- Approximately 70 per cent of all jobs are found through networking.
- Most people you meet have around 200 contacts.

7. Listen

Listen with the intent to understand, not the intent to reply. Often we are so busy forming our response in our head that we're not really listening to what is being said. It's also good to listen more than you speak. You'll never learn anything while you are talking.

8. Befriend first-timers

We all know the uncomfortable feeling of walking into an event for the first time. Imagine how relieved you'd feel if someone took you under their wing and introduced you around to others. Doing this for others will not only help you be remembered, but will make you feel good as well.

9. Use names often

People love the sound of their own name. If you use someone's name often, it helps to build a connection and also helps you to remember their name. Just don't go overboard or it will sound forced and not genuine.

10. Follow up

Only about one in 10 people follow up with people they've met at a networking event. Be one of them. It's all about building connections and relationships, and each little thing you can do towards this makes a huge difference.

More info and events at
www.terri.cooper.com.au