Networking is simply about building relationships. In business we all need a solid group of people we can trust and respect. This of course works both ways.

**JPA’s Twenty Networking Tips**

* Be yourself. There are many ways to network and you need to choose the techniques and tools that suit your personality and style. Not all the suggestions here will work for you.
* The energy within your network must stem from you – be the guiding light, the one who introduces useful contacts to others – try to keep in touch with them all.
* Who are the key players you’d like to get to know in your organisation? If you don’t know them can a colleague arrange an introduction? Suggest a meeting over coffee or ask for just 15 minutes of their time for a chat.
* Don’t be afraid to seek help or advice from people you meet (they will be flattered and most will respond positively). It’s a great way to learn, develop connections and promote yourself.
* In conversation, genuinely listen to what people say and make a considered response. Are there any connections you can help them with?
* Face to face conversations are still the best way to deepen connections and to build trust. Aim to be an engaging conversationalist, ask questions, give feedback, include others in the discussion. Your genuine and positive engagement will generate interest in you.
* When someone in your company gets promoted or achieves something special, send them your congratulations. Even if you don’t know them well, the gesture will be appreciated and it will mark you out as someone who is interested in others.
* Use Linked In, Twitter, Facebook and other professional networking sites. Half an hour a day is plenty of time to find and keep in touch with ten people in your field who are openly networking.
* Always carry your business cards but don’t give them out like sweets. Only offer them when appropriate.
* Make a note on business cards you receive to remind you of who you have talked to (e.g. “26/4/11 woman in red – send copy of my article”).
* If you’re going to an event do your homework in advance. Who’s going? Who would you like to meet? Who should you make a point of meeting? If it’s a dinner, who will you be sitting next to? (the organisers will normally give you this information if you ask) Do some research on people beforehand to help you to make conversation.
* Prepare your answer to the question “What do you do?”. This is your opportunity to engage, interest and sparkle! Try not to be defined by your job title. You are a multi-faceted individual with a range of skills and talents that are portable.
* At an event join a new cluster of people by simply saying “Hello, can I join you?” (with a smile!), and waiting for introductions. If they don’t acknowledge you, don’t take it personally, just move on – they could be deep in a private conversation.
* Help others to join your cluster by opening the circle, welcoming them and bringing them into the conversation (e.g. “Hi, we were talking about …”)
* Approach someone on their own with a neutral conversation-opener (e.g. “Hi, isn’t this an interesting venue?” or “Have you been to one of these events before?”)
* Don’t invent an excuse to move on from one group to another – people appreciate that you want to talk to others. “It was nice meeting you” or (if appropriate) “Would you mind if I gave you a call?” are quite sufficient.
* Focus on quality, not quantity. In a large group setting, circulate and meet people but don’t try to talk to everyone.  A few meaningful conversations are more valuable than 50 hasty introductions.
* Managing food and drink at a stand up event can be a challenge. Better to eat beforehand if you can and stick to one glass of wine.
* Always follow up a meeting with a short email, e.g. “It was great to meet you yesterday and I’d love to learn more about what you do”. Do you have time for a coffee next week?” It’s nice to include a personal comment picking up on something from your conversation, such as “I hope you managed to catch your train”. It shows you were listening and that you’re not sending them a standard email.
* Be patient if your networking efforts don’t immediately achieve results***.*** Stay politely persistent with your contacts and build momentum.  Networking is like gardening - you do not harvest immediately after planting the seed. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off.

© Copyright Jeanette Purcell Associates Ltd 2011