

# Networking for Introverts

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As an introvert (INFP myself), I know how challenging it can be to do something as extroverted as networking. At least, it was, until I made 16 discoveries that make networking fun and easy for myself. I hope you find them helpful as well.

## 1. Being Visible

First of all, and most importantly to me, it doesn't do me much good to do great work if nobody knows about it. It's not fair to me to be invisible nor to the people who need to know me and benefit from who I am and what I'm doing.

## 2. Time Efficient

I like to maximize my time, and, frankly, I'm not really good at wasting it. Being efficient is important to me. While I prefer to build relationships one-on-one, it's necessary to find the right people to take the time and energy. Networking affords me the opportunity to build relationships one person at a time – it's just that there's a whole bunch of people to meet and greet! Statistically, it plainly makes sense.

## 3. In-Person Meetings

Meeting someone in person is an irreplaceable way to know your connection points – it's very different than meeting via technology (email, chat rooms, phone calls). I'm happy connecting via technology AFTER physically meeting people – it's easier to keep the momentum and it feels more real when you've met in person.

## 4. Series of Focused Mini-Meetings

Networking is really a series of strategic meetings in a finite timeframe. Strategic means that it makes sense for my business *and* for me. Meetings are with people who potentially fit my ideal client profile. My business coach once told me to figure out who my fish were, and go where they are to meet them. I've discovered I like "speed-fishing" – you never know who you're going to meet!

## 5. I Would Go Anyway

I go to a networking event only when there is something about it that I like – either a speaker I want to hear, a topic that interests me, a targeted audience I want to understand or connect with better or a cause that I want to support. If there is no reason to go, I don't. However, if the event is something I enjoy anyway, then it's a success whether I network (translation: meet anybody) or not. However, I usually end up meeting more people than I would have predicted!

## 6. Speak Up

I've learned that I have something to say and I can say it to anybody who cares to listen. In my youth, I've let people come up with or say my idea just so I didn't have to get past

feeling anxious about speaking in front of more than three people. I'm over that now. I say what I need to now because I'm the only one who can say it my way.

## **7. Good Networking Points**

I've learned what it takes for me to recognize good networking, both in myself and in others. Some of what I experience as "good networking": having a concise audio logo for introduction (rarely just my title – people tend to "box" me in immediately), wearing my name badge on the right so it's visible when shaking hands, giving my business card only when asked and asking only for those I really want, understanding what can help someone and offering what tools I have to do so without expectation of a return in the moment.

Since I am focusing on the people I am meeting, how they think and what could help them, the focus isn't on me and the pressure is gone (it only existed in my mind anyway!). After all... giving is more rewarding than receiving and what goes around, comes around. I heard somewhere to be more interested than more interesting, so I ask questions and spend more time listening than talking. Again, it takes the pressure off me to perform or lead the conversation.

It's my experience that people don't get to talk about themselves very often, so it actually opens people up to expressing themselves in a very real way. Have you noticed that a stranger will share the most intimate things with you? It happens with me because I ask questions that have nothing to do with the event, but instead, to make people feel good and relaxed. Examples are questions like "how did you get started in your business?", "who is a good referral for you?", and "how can I help you manifest something right now?".

## **8. Know My Strengths**

People are just people. I used to be intimidated by "scary" people. For purposes of definition, they were the ones who seemed on top of their game in every way – totally threatening to me! They were experienced, looked the part, seemed in their element in meeting and greeting people, obviously good in their business (or so I deduced) – in other words, reflecting all my discomfort points. What a gift for my personal development "to do" list!

I learned that it was really all about me not knowing my strengths. It was about me feeling out of place, not realizing that people weren't really paying to me as much attention as I thought they were – they were generally thinking about themselves more! It's impossible to know what other people are thinking about you under such circumstances (although, as my intuition has grown, I come pretty close these days!). Now I know that I am offering a valuable service, in a way that no one else can do it, and that I am an equal in the world of business (with sometimes more experience than I realize!).

## **9. It's All About Them**

I learned that everyone has a story and, true to the old adage, you can't always judge a book by its cover. Once you know what's inside, it's hard to be afraid of anything – especially another person. I now trust that I meet and build relationships with the right people – I know they're the right ones because they like me and I like them. A good business relationship, like any other, is about having a comfort level with that person. It's the person behind the personae who I want to know, and with whom I will ultimately like and trust enough to share my connections and referrals.

## **10. Supportive Environment**

I make sure that the environment is supportive and comfortable for me. If I'm unable to create the environment personally, I pay attention to my body – position myself with a wall behind me, have something in my hands, make sure my business cards are easily accessible. I do not eat or drink too much – that just makes me uncomfortable. I take care to not apologize for how I look, how I'm dressed, how I sound or how I act – I am confident in who I am and my physical presentation reflects that.

## **11. Relationships Are Power**

As intuitive as I am, early in my business life, I didn't understand the power of relationships in business. I used to get bogged by the success of other people who didn't have the skills or intelligence on par with me (not an insult – just an observation) simply because they knew people. Now I know the real point of marketing is not who I know but who knows me – somehow, I find that comforting.

## **12. Choose It**

I choose networking as a strategy for many reasons, and sometimes I have to remember that I am CHOOSING to do it. I can also CHOOSE to not do it. I have the power.

## **13. Set Intentions**

It helps me to set my intentions set ahead of time, whether it's to meet 3 new people with good connection, share information, learn the latest industry buzz, find someone with a common interest, brainstorm new ideas, celebrate a success, build my referral list, find someone to create a support or an R and D team with, or just remind myself how good I am at what I do. I used to have in my mind several different conversational topics before I got there, but I don't do that anymore. I trust my natural ebullience for life to take me where I need to go conversationally. But it's a good first step, especially if you are new to this whole networking thing.

#### **14. Being an Attractor**

I like being a connector and creating networking opportunities – I ask myself who do I know? How can I bring people together? I figure that if I put out good energy, and keep an open mind, people are drawn to me. It's the Law of Attraction in its most fundamental form.

Besides, being involved in things is fun. There's a universal law that essentially states that "one gets out what one puts in" - so I go for it! My tendency is to commit with loyalty and full participation in what I choose to be the right vehicle for me to have fun and meet people. I just have to take some time afterward to recover (as only we introverts know how to do!).

In fact, I'm starting to know so many people that I don't get the chance to personally connect like I used to, so I've started a couple of networking groups so I do get to see people regularly. I have become a circle of influence by doing this, and it's really fun! Some of the ideas I play with to create networking opportunities are: a targeted marketing forum, a social dinner club, a speaking engagement where people want to hear me, and doing what I do anyway (plays, movies, shopping – where there are people, there is the potential to network!). It's not about the event anyway – it's about sharing energy and connecting people. Just as I am looking for kindred spirits, people are looking for excuses to meet people like them.

#### **15. Potential Business (what a concept!)**

I may actually meet someone who is clearly interested in my services. If there is someone who wants to explore what I do as a potential client, I follow through by asking more thorough questions. It can feel a little uncomfortable, but it's by illuminating the pain that we can change it. My prospect instinctively knows that I am sincere and that I know what I'm talking about. A side benefit is that I learn more about my audio logo every time I talk with someone on that level – they let me know what they care about and if I want to work with more people like them, I incorporate that information into my audio logo. And there are times when people aren't even really asking for themselves, but they want to know what I do because they know somebody else who might be interested.

#### **16. Leave a Door Open**

My last personal secret to networking is that I always "leave a door open" with the people I want to connect with again. It is up to me to create that space by offering one of my tools (a helpful article, an idea, a referral, or another event) to cultivate the relationship. The real networking actually happens after the networking meeting. But I do take the time to recoup in between!

## **What's It All Mean?**

Networking is a win-win exchange of ideas, energy and resources – it helps all the people involved, one at a time – which is right back to my relationship comfort zone! Networking is the gateway to marketing visibility by generating more contacts, leads, referrals and, ideally, new clients. The more people I meet, the more business I will generate. That is a statistical reality that pulls me forward, but that's my carrot – you have to find yours.

It is my wish for you that this has been helpful, encouraging and thought provoking in helping you – a fellow introvert - to be more effective in your networking. Over time, it has become easier for me because I have created the conditions and the mindset that support me in networking. It really is one of the best strategies for widening your circle of influence, growing your business and making new friends.