

THE A-Z OF ATTENDING FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING EVENTS



by
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Step Out From The Shadows

Networking fuels many business opportunities but not everyone is comfortable attending networking events. If that's you then this A-Z has been created with you in mind. You understand that meeting new people and building relationships is an effective marketing tool but find the process uncomfortable, difficult and/or unproductive.

Post Covid you may have got out of the habit of going to networking events and my hope is that these insights will enable you to feel more relaxed about the prospect and willing to give them a go.

Attend a few groups often and get known in your area or sector. Good relationships need to be fed and nurtured and you want to remind others that you are around and in business should they have an opportunity for you. Being seen makes you harder to forget and being top of mind means you are more likely to be referred.

Be assured that all the people in the room don't already know each other even though it can feel like it when you walk into the room. Just because they are talking doesn't mean that they are already friends or even acquaintances AND it doesn't mean that they wouldn't want to talk to you. There are lots of ways to work out who to approach and how to start a conversation ... once you know it's easy!

Consistency is King. Networking isn't about attending one meeting and making a sale. You need to be consistent in your attendance, your follow up and your intention. And don't stop when you start to get busy, lack of consistency will really show then.

Don't sell. Networking is about building relationships, not about making a quick sale. Knowing the difference is vital!

Expect nothing when you pass on information, a lead, referral or opportunity. Do it because you can, in the knowledge that others will do the same for you. Have a look at tip "R" to understand why this works so well.



Fear of rejection is a concern for most human beings. In the words of Susan Jeffers "Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway"; don't let it stop you from networking. There are so many ways to reduce that fear so it doesn't stop you. I'll tell you more after you get to Z!

Get to an event early if you don't like walking into a room full of strangers. If you arrive a few minutes early you will be chatting to the organiser when others arrive and they will assume you are part of the "in crowd". And this isn't the only good reason to chat to the organiser on arrival.

Happy thoughts as you walk in will help you smile naturally (you can't fake a smile ... you'll look like you are snarling at best or worse still about to attack). And do smile as you walk in ... you will look much more approachable and friendly.

If you say you will do something, then do it. We determine your ability to deliver your product or service on your ability to do what you say. And speed of response will affect our assumptions too.

Jokes are good but be aware of those around you. Blue and off-colour jokes and language may be your style but it might not be the style of your perfect client (or their contacts).

Keepp going. Once you have settled on a group keep going ... if you only meet monthly and get to speak to the group for 60 seconds then at the end of the year you will have only presented for 10 - 12 minutes, not much time for anyone to really understand what you do.

Listen, listen and listen again! The best way to build a relationship with someone is to listen to what they say. Most of us aren't listening, we're waiting for our turn to speak. Really listen to the people you are speaking to and use active listening techniques.

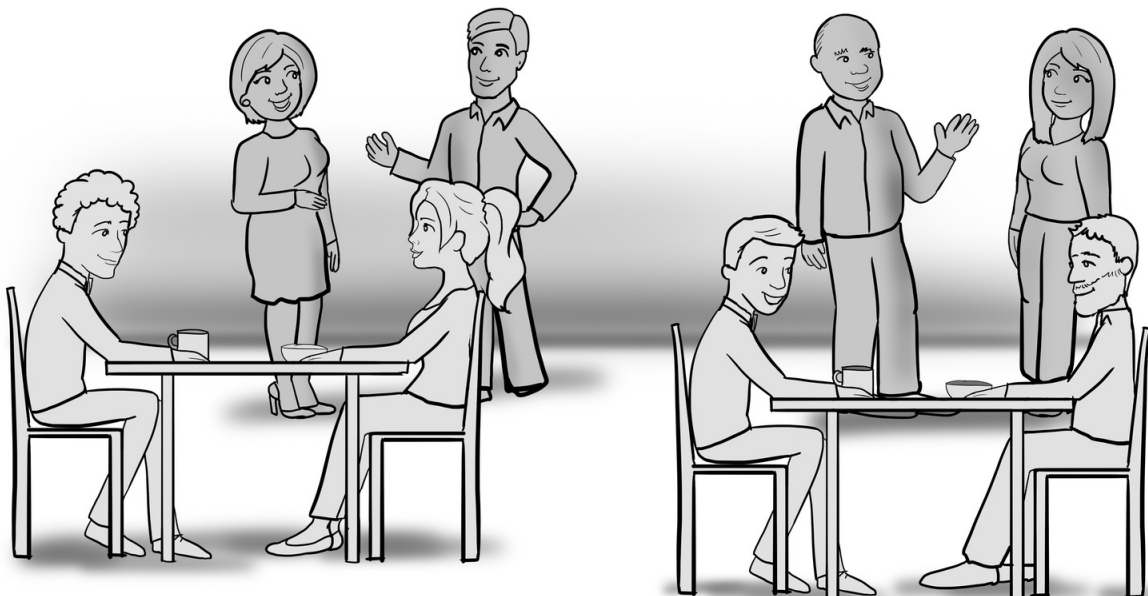


Move around the room. If you find yourself deep in conversation with someone then arrange to call or meet again to continue the conversation at a later date – neither you nor they will get the most from the event if you stay together the whole time. Of course, you may not want to meet up again for a host of reasons, in which case there are many ways to exit politely ... see X.

Networker's neck is the curse of someone who is always looking over your shoulder to see if there is anyone more interesting to speak to. Make sure you're not guilty of this – it's rude! Be in the moment and finish the conversation you're in.

Opportunities come to those that are open to them. Don't assume that the person you are talking to can't help you ... they may be the route to exactly what you need. Finding out may not be easy but it can absolutely be worth the effort.

Partnerships are gold and they can come from the most unexpected places. The financial advisor who gets her best leads from a mobile hairdresser; the stylist who is referred by the business coach. You have no idea where your next best lead could come from! It might come from left field but it can also be part of your strategy so planning ahead is a must.



Questions and the asking of them will help you to find out more about the people you meet and find commonality more quickly. If you find networking hard, have a few go-to questions you can use to start a conversation. Include some that start with “Who”, “What”, “When” or “How” so you don’t just get yes or no answers.

Reciprocity should be your rule. Cialdini’s Principle of Reciprocity is to “be the first to give and to ensure that what you give is personalised and unexpected”. Make this your rule for networking and you’ll see what a difference this makes.

Speak clearly. Networking events can be noisy and if you mumble or talk to the floor people will gravitate away from you. Diction and clarity are even more important if you want to be heard in crowds and you can learn techniques to make your voice carry better, have more clarity and credibility.

Test meeting styles and types. Some meetings might not be right for you but give them a few visits or try another group in the same format. Most groups will let you visit several times to see if you like them and/or the format. Remember that group dynamics change too so if you went a while ago don’t be afraid to try them again – it’s really worth keeping a tab on where you have gone and which groups are working best for you ... it will change over time as your business changes.



Under use your business cards! The art of good networking is not seeing how many people you can hand your card to like a free leaflet. If you meet 3 or 4 new contacts and have a reason to follow them up, then you have had a good meeting. But do remember to follow up.

Vanity isn’t a useful trait in most areas of business and definitely not on the networking circuit. Make sure that the conversation isn’t all about you and what you do. Otherwise, you will lose out on opportunities to connect and build great relationships.

Willingly let others speak. A great networking relationship is built on what you know about others so let them speak first and then you have a much better chance of knowing how you can help.

Xit with care. (Okay I know its spelt EXIT but give me a break!) If you're in conversation with someone and you want to get away, be polite. There are many ways to remind them that you are there to mingle and thank them for their time – it depends on what outcome you want. Lots of people avoid networking events because they don't know how to exit conversations elegantly ... if all else fails try inviting them to get a drink with you or suggest you join some others in the room.

Yes is an attitude of mind. Be positive. People don't want to be with people who suck the joy from their lives even on a wet Wednesday morning in November at 6:45am! In the words of my grandmother ... if you don't have something nice to say don't say anything at all.

Zero interest can be written all over your face. Be sure to stay in the moment and concentrate on what you can do for the other person; if you don't understand what they are talking about then ask more questions!



Still hate the idea of networking but know you need to? Then give me a call!

I work with business people just like you who want to network more effectively. We can work on-line or face to face and cover anything from deciding on where to network to pitching your business, from entering the room to analysing the best groups to attend based on the results you are getting. I can even accompany you to a networking event if needed!

Book a call to discuss how I can help you to step out from the shadows and unlock the power of networking.

And whatever you decide to do, may you always feel comfortable standing up and speaking out.

Sallyxxx

Sally Hindmarch
Chief Communicator
Successfully networking for 20 years



About Sally ...

With a degree in Psychology & Drama and a Diploma in Management, Sally has spent much of her career in sales and client service roles. She has witnessed first-hand how poor communication can make or break a deal, a relationship or a business. Clients buy from who they like best, staff work late because of who asks them and colleagues work better with some individuals than others.



Since 2000, Sally has run Partners With You Ltd, a company that uses techniques from the world of theatre and the skills of professional actors to help people in business communicate more effectively and confidently; typically working on areas such as presentation, storytelling, team building, leadership, sales and customer service.

Sally is a certified PRISM Brain Mapping practitioner and Language & Behaviour Profile practitioner which she also uses to help clients understand their communication preferences and how to adapt them to get better outcomes.

A contributor to Steve Bridger's book Transform Your Communication Skills, Sally writes a monthly column for The Watford Observer and other Newsquest papers. She is the author of Step Out from the Shadows; How to be seen and heard at work.

"Sally is excellent at quickly spotting areas for improvement that make a big difference. She is calm, capable and very knowledgably with lots of vital tricks to share."

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When not working you are likely to find her puppy sitting for her two grand-dogs. She is at her happiest surrounded by family and friends with a glass of white wine in her hand.

To find out how you can work with Sally to improve your communication skills visit her website stepoutfromtheshadows.co.uk. Click here to [buy her book direct](#) or [via audible](#) and if you want to speak to her about a specific communication concern then email her at sally@stepoutfromtheshadows.co.uk or [book a call](#) with her now.

*"Sally has helped me with insights, tools and techniques to help me improve and clarify my communication ... She has an unusual combination of being very supportive, whilst also challenging you to be the best you can be." **CW***