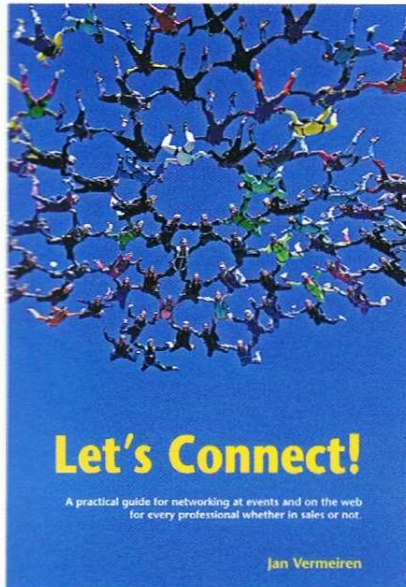




5 steps of networking at an event



Cover of the book *Let's Connect*

Here are 5 steps of attending a network event that can help both groups make the most of it:

Step 1: Preparation

Most people don't prepare for an event. But they do complain afterwards, saying that they wasted their time or didn't meet the right people. So before attending an event, ask yourself following questions: what is my goal at the event? Who do I want to meet? And is this event the best place to meet these people? Is there enough time for networking? And who are the organisers?

Step 2: Making contact

This is what most people find the most difficult part: making contact with other people, especially if this is a whole new situation or event. Here are some tips:

- Ask a question about something you have both in common. There are always at least 3 things: location, theme/speaker and organisation.
- Have yourself introduced to new people by someone you already know.

Most of us go to networking events to make new contacts and to maintain our existing relationships. Both are equally important. Some people only want to expand their network and tend to neglect their existing contacts. Others don't know how to approach new people, feel uncomfortable doing so or feel "guilty" when they leave the groups they already belong for a long time to.

If you're new, ask the organisation to introduce you. They are there for you!

- The most important thing is to start talking to each other. Just start. Nobody is there to judge you and almost everyone welcomes new contacts. But many people feel uncomfortable approaching someone else. If you take the first step yourself they will be grateful!

Step 3: Having a conversation

After you have established contact, how can you go for a real conversation?

- Ask open questions (starting with how, what, when, where, who). This will give you more information to ask other questions and to get to know the other person.
- Ask what is specific or typical about the other person or the organisation that he/she represents. This helps you to remember the other person better.
- Focus on the other person: let him/her talk more than you do yourself.

Step 4: Ending the conversation

At an event you and the person you are talking to are both there to meet new people and maintain existing relationships. So it's OK to end the conversation after approximately 15 minutes. You don't have to stick together the whole event. But how do you do that?

- Thank the other person for the conversation
- See if you can help each other further. If this is the case, exchange business cards.
- Introduce the other person to other people in the room and/or ask to be introduced to someone else.

Step 5: Follow up

Whatever your goal at the event was, the results are in the follow up. However, this is the part that most people forget to do. Some things to keep in mind:

- The follow up doesn't start a few days after you have met, but DURING the conversation. Look for commonalities, interests and ways to help the other person. This gives you input to follow up and to start building your relationship.
- Schedule time in your agenda to do follow up actions.
- Don't hard sell on people afterwards nor pass their business cards to a call center to do this. Build a personal relationship instead!

Good luck at your next event!

This is an excerpt from the networking book "Let's Connect" that contains lot of practical tips for networking on events and on the web. More info at www.lets-connect.be (with a FREE "light version" of the book). For a FREE networking e-course, visit: www.networking-coach.com.