

How to Work a Network



It doesn't matter where you work or what you do. If you're not building a strategic network, you could be missing out on opportunities to advance your business and career.

So how does one balance networking with an already lengthy list of daily demands? Set a plan and focus on quality rather than quantity.

Here are five easy steps for turning contacts into assets:

1) Make a Connection

When meeting someone new, establish a link back to you. Do you have a friend or colleague in common? Have you read an article in which the person was featured? If so, let them know. By warming the door, you spark an immediate connection and lead them into a conversation.

2) Ease the Situation

Most people can detect the networking vibe from a mile away. Let your contact know right off the bat that what you're looking for are ideas and advice. Professionals will feel respected, many let their guard down and offer more valuable information.

3) State your Purpose

In two minutes or less, clearly state your objective. Are you exploring ways to advance your career? If so, give a bit of information about your background and future goals. Are you seeking out new customers? Talk about your current customer base, your success stories and how you'd like to grow your business.

4) Engage your Contact

Ask for feedback. Actively listen to what the person is saying. If anything is unclear or if you wish to learn more, ask them. Now that you have them in front of you, make every second of their (and your) time count.

5) Get More Bang for your Buck

Each contact you make should expand to at least one more contact so you can continue to expand your growing network. Thank the person, exchange business cards and close with a connection.