

Contact Development and Business Networking Skills

10 tips to take away

1. **Focus on your existing clients.** How can you help them, over and above what you do already? Think about their strategy and issues - can you or one of your contacts assist?
2. **Keep in regular contact with your network,** so that you are 'front of mind' when they need your expertise to capitalise on opportunities or solve problems.
2. **Farm your internal network.** Make sure people know you, and the benefits you bring. If you sell their services too, they will reciprocate.
4. **Listen to what people say** - don't try to sell. You can't solve people's problems or help them make the most of opportunities if you don't know what these are. That means listening, absorbing and not talking.
5. **Make the most of the business development time** available to you by always having your list of contacts at hand. Snatch the odd 15 minutes to make calls or write a letter - it's what the great business developers do to keep in touch, despite busy schedules.
6. **Keep current with what's going on in the business world.** If you are not 'up to speed' it shows (and it reflects in people's opinion of you as an adviser).
7. **Be great at the so important 'soft' skills** of building rapport and empathy. No matter how technically brilliant you are, if you don't 'click' with your contact it's difficult to make progress and win work. Learn the SCIENCE (yes it is a science) of building a relationship.
8. **Make sure that you have at least seven contact 'episodes'** with people in a position to give you work in a year. Think about letters, calls, invitations, meetings, literature, referrals etc. Each one, if carefully planned and relevant, helps to build the relationship and leads to new work opportunities.
9. **Learn how to be great** at highlighting 'why you', both informally and formally. Practice. If you can't convince yourself, you won't convince others.
10. **Put yourself 'in their shoes' at all times.** Only then will you really understand and empathise with their situation. Think 'them not you' and you will succeed more.

