

Working the room hints and tips

1. **Don't worry if you feel nervous in these situations** - all of the research points to the fact that the vast majority of people feel the same!
2. **Get there early, whether you are a host or a guest** - you will feel more comfortable when there are less people - and it will give you a chance to speak to people on their own, before groups start to form.
3. **Find out who the guests are before the event** - such knowledge gives you a chance to do a bit of research on them before you go, so that you will be more confident and knowledgeable.
4. **Have your networker's toolkit with you** - your cards, a pen, the guest list and a pocket notebook to jot down any actions you have agreed to undertake for contacts you make at the function.
5. **Make the first move and approach people on their own** - it's easier to start a conversation with a single person, as opposed to trying to join a group. If they are on their own they will welcome someone to talk to. Pick someone who looks approachable - watch for open body language and eye contact.
6. **You can introduce yourself to anyone with ...** "Can I introduce myself, I'm [your name] from [your organisation]..." Think about your 'small talk' remarks - have they travelled far? 'Been to the venue before? Do they know many people at the function?
7. **Have some interesting topics of conversation handy** - you don't have to talk about football or the weather. Read the newspaper before you go to the function so that you are 'current' and can tell people things they didn't know (insights) and, where appropriate, you can give your point of view. A scan of *The Times* Business section will equip you with all the current business stories. Take a quick look at the tabloids for unusual and 'light' stories.
8. **Have your answer to 'what do you do?' ready** - it's known as your 'elevator pitch' - phrase your answer in terms of the benefits you give to clients. Keep it short, in plain English and jargon-free.



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9. **Control the conversation** - and take the pressure off yourself by asking them about their job, their organisation, their holidays, family, interests, their views on current topics, what's keeping them busy just now, what's on the horizon for their sector in the coming year etc.
10. **Make a point of remembering people's names** - when you are introduced. Repeat it back to them ..."Pleased to meet you, John ..". If appropriate, use it one or twice in the conversation and then at the end when you are leaving them ..."It's been really nice talking to you, John."
11. **Remember your personal impact points** - when you first meet. People draw conclusions from body language and tone of voice. Showing interest, warmth and enthusiasm are the keys to a positive first impression. A firm, but not overdone, handshake and eye contact are elements that have a real positive impact.
12. **Listen with real attention** - and remember the details so that you can use them in conversation this time, and subsequently. What they say will give you lots of avenues down which to take the conversation.
13. **Focus on what is interesting to them** - find out about their interests and what's important to them - people usually love talking about themselves and topics on which they are knowledgeable.
14. **Keep your cards handy** - in a card holder, a wallet or your handbag ... somewhere where you can get to them easily and quickly.
15. **Spend some time with people you know** - but don't spend the entire function with them. It's important not to ignore the people you already know, but don't overdo it. Ask them to introduce you to other people you don't know ... and you can do the same for them with people you know.
16. **Ask open questions** - those beginning with what, where, when, why and how. The answers will be more substantial than a 'closed' question. 'Chatty people' will give you a full answer to most questions, but don't rely on it if you ask a closed question to a quieter type.



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17. **Think about how you can help them** - showing an interest in people and doing them an appropriate favour, is a good way to build real rapport. Offer to introduce them to people you know, for example.
18. **Ask for their card if you want to keep in touch** - if you don't get their card, all research suggests you won't continue the fledgling relationship.
19. **Write information on the back of the card** - after the function, write down some of the key points of the conversation so that you will remember and can use them in subsequent conversations. With their permission, at the function you can jot down any action you are going to take on their behalf ... "Would you mind if I just made a note on the back of your card that I'll send the research report to you, it will remind me to do it tomorrow." Show that you are serious and efficient.
20. **File all the relevant cards you receive** - if you don't, you won't have a sensible follow up system - and follow up is what champion networkers do most effectively.
21. **Read the card when you receive it from others** - it will help to fix their details in your mind for the next time you meet. It also shows that you are taking a real interest in them. It may also stimulate further questions and conversation topics immediately.
22. **Move around and limit the time you spend with any one person, unless the conversation is critical to you.**
Working the room means moving around and having conversations with others, not spending all your time with one contact - unless that is the contact you really want to meet and have an in-depth discussion with.
23. **If you need to move on** - offer to introduce them to someone you know, or excuse yourself by going for a drink. You can also suggest that you both join a group or introduce yourselves to someone who is on their own.
24. **If you can, stand facing the door** - then you have full sight of who is entering and leaving the room and can act accordingly.



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- 25. Follow up quickly and informally - speed does thrill here** ... but only if you avoid any hint of 'selling'. Position your approach as helping the other person. The litmus test for quality networking is a follow up with integrity and professionalism. Think about what value you can add to this person ...how can you help them?
- 26. Do what you say you are going to do** - if you have agreed a follow up action, make sure that you do it. Research indicates that, if you don't do what you say (even if it is a relatively insignificant action, like sending a publication), you will go down in their estimation and be linked emotionally in their mind as someone who doesn't deliver on their promises.
- 27. If you are going to approach groups** - approach those with three or more people. It is easier to break in. Look for friendly faces and open body language, to avoid the embarrassment of trying to join in a conversation where newcomers are not welcome.
- 28. Keep it up** - networking is both an art and a science. Use these tips, get out there and meet new people and you can't fail to get better. 'Keep it up' also applies to follow up - you can't build a trusting relationship on one meeting ... think about how you can move the relationship forward; be proactive and it will pay dividends



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