**Top Networking Tips for Successful Events**

1. **Lower your expectations**

Many people go into networking environments feeling like they have to meet a ton of people – they equate the number of business cards they collect to their “success” at an event. That’s very stressful and ineffective! Let’s get real: How many cards are on your desk right now, just sitting there collecting dust? Do you even remember who those people are? 😉

**Bolder Move:** Have one or two quality conversations per networking event. A few meaningful, connective conversations allow you to get to know one another person as more than WHAT you do. You’re more likely to remember one another, follow up, and build a relationship.

1. **You’re there to converse, not to close**

Ever have somebody trying to sell you something the minute you meet them? Or maybe they start interrogating you to dig at whether or not you’re a prospect? SO annoying!

**Bolder Move:** You’re there to connect with other people and build relationships. When you’re speaking with someone, you don’t know who they know. Personal relationships are what serve us in life and in business. You never know what connection you may need, or that you might provide to another person.

1. **Warm up with someone you know**

Even the most extraverted person sometimes finds it daunting to walk into a room full of strangers. If you spot someone you know, go over to them and get your feet on the ground for a few minutes! Catching up with them will allow you to relax more. You can even generate a little feel-good oxytocin with that person by making each other laugh. *This is an especially good approach for introverts.*

**Bolder Move**: Get grounded and arrive in the room before diving into conversations. Even if you’re in a room where you can’t find anyone you know, you can sit for a few minutes in the room, breathe, relax, and get the lay of the land. **Remind yourself that lots of other people are probably feeling the same way,** so you’re not alone.

1. **Pretend you’re the host**

Be on the lookout for someone who looks like a deer in headlights and try this:

“You’re here for the first time, Mary? Me, too! Acme Widget Networking Group seems wonderful to me. Have you met Joe?” By playing host (even if you’re there for the first time!) you step into helping someone else connect and feel more at ease. This assumes that the host role calms you down, and gives you direction, too.

**Bolder Move:** Be a connector to generate the feeling that you and others belong. When you take your attention off of yourself and your **inner critic** chatter, you generate energy and levity that attracts others. **Bonus:** helping people in this way makes a great impression when you’re genuine about it. *People will remember how you make them feel, especially if you make them feel like they belong.*

1. **Connect at WHO not WHAT**

“Hi, my name is Bill and I sell real estate. I sell residential and commercial properties in Anytown, USA. I’m a realtor.” Memorable? We think not. In fact, that conversation starter about WHAT Bill does is downright boring and does not tell us anything about who he is as a human being. If you’re looking at a few business cards the next morning, Bill’s is not going to stand out.

**Bolder Move:** Show people who you are, because titles are a dime a dozen. If we line you up with ten other people who have your exact job title, how will we remember you? You distinguish yourself by being who you are and learning to connect at that level. The **Bolder Move** is to be more personal. Share what lights you up, what challenges you, the adventures you’re hoping to have, or a Bolder Move you’re working towards. You never know what common ground you’ll find with others.

1. **Be more INTERESTED than INTERESTING**

One of the dullest conversations we can run into is the one where your conversation partner doesn’t act like a conversation partner at all. Have you met this person? They drone on and on, barely stopping for breath, AND they try way too hard to be interesting, which comes across as both disingenuous and boring.

**Bolder Move:** Share space in the conversation! Show interest in the person in front of you and share who you are. Some people are comfortable talking about themselves, others aren’t. Do an honest self-check to sort out how much oxygen you take up in conversations. If you notice it’s always about you, ask a question and then…stop talking and listen, without interrupting. If you notice that you’re very quiet find something in what the other person is saying and get in there! It takes practice to create balanced, engaged conversations.

1. **Be a Croissant, not a Bagel\***

It’s awkward, deflating, and can leave us feeling isolated and unconfident when we go to an event where people create “social walls.” These are tight circles of people, who likely know each other, who are so engaged that they don’t notice whether others are alone or looking for a conversation to join. The body language of a tight social circle or “bagel” (or donut if you have a sweet tooth!) may feel unwelcoming or impenetrable and can be downright daunting!

**Bolder Move:** Open up your circle when you’re in one. The open croissant shape signals to others that they are welcome to join your conversation. If you find yourself in a closed off circle, simply step back a bit and open it up by angling your body language out. You can also keep a slight eye on the room to see if anyone looks lost or in need of a conversation to join. Making eye contact, smiling, and using a welcoming hand gesture to invite others in is an inclusive approach folks will appreciate. *\*Croissant vs Bagel courtesy of Robbie Samuels, LLC*