

## Networking Events

### What is Networking

In this session we will learn what networking is all about, how we can find networking opportunities and do's and don'ts to keep you on the right track.

Networking is about doing what your mother told you to never do . . . talk to strangers.

It's like playing host at someone else's party. At a real level, it's about learning about other people and finding the links that you have with them.



Networking is a socioeconomic business activity by which business people and entrepreneurs meet to form business relationships and to recognize, create, or act upon business opportunities, share information and seek potential partners for ventures. Throughout your life you will make networking contacts that develop into relationships including friends, colleagues, and professional prospects. To network you have to go out there and meet people.

### Different types of networking events

Making connections with other professionals is an important part of growing your social enterprise. Knowing people in your field or industry could help you get referrals or other opportunities. The first step toward meeting other professionals is attending networking events.

Networking events are a chance for groups of professionals to gather together and make connections. Each event you attend may look different. Some are more casual and give people time to converse with one another. Others are

more structured and could feature a lecture or presentation. The purpose of these events is for people in an industry to grow their network.

Here are 10 types of networking events that can help you

1. Happy hour meetups
2. Industry-specific seminars
3. Virtual groups
4. Career fairs
5. Conferences/trade shows
6. Breakfast or luncheon meetings
7. Community service groups
8. Speed networking
9. Workshops
10. Roundtable discussions

#### 1. Happy hour meetups

Happy hour meetups are a casual type of networking event. Usually, the organisers of the event rent out a portion of a bar or restaurant for your group. During the happy hour, everyone is welcome to have a few drinks and appetisers while they converse with other professionals. Since this is a laid-back environment, it's a low-stakes way to get to know other professionals on a personal level.

#### 2. Industry-specific seminars

During an industry-specific seminar, you can learn about different topics that are relevant to your field or industry. Many event organisers plan time before the seminar where you can converse with other professionals. Generally, there will be light snacks and refreshments to enjoy. During the seminar portion, an industry expert teaches the group about a topic. For example, if you're going to a marketing-specific seminar, you may learn about topics like social media strategies, copywriting techniques or email marketing.

#### 3. Virtual groups

There are many sectors or job-specific virtual groups you can join for networking purposes. Many of them are on social media websites or online forums. The group may use email newsletters or WhatsApp messages to inform members of

different virtual networking events. A common type of virtual meetup is when an expert gives an online presentation through video conferencing. An event organiser may also hold a live Q&A where you can message or video chat with other professionals about specific questions you have.

#### 4. Career fairs

Career fairs are excellent networking events for people starting their careers. Many colleges and universities hold career fairs throughout the school year for students to attend. During this event, you can meet with representatives from multiple companies which can be complimentary to your own business. It's a chance for you to introduce yourself and ask a few questions about their company. Many employers with job openings have booths at career fairs, which is a great opportunity to give representatives your resume so they're familiar with your name when you apply to a position.

#### 5. Conferences/trade shows

Many industries combine conferences and trade shows. Essentially, a trade show is when businesses within a particular industry can present their products and services. Trade shows usually take place at a large expo centre, where businesses set up company-sponsored booths. People interested in these products or services can talk to representatives at each booth or exhibition, which is a useful way for businesses and their clients to meet face-to-face. Some industries add a conference portion to the trade show. During this portion, guests can attend various seminars and keynote speeches that relate to the industry. Many of these presentations count toward continuing education hours. This kind of event also gives professionals a chance to gather in one place and connect with one another.

#### 6. Breakfast or luncheon meetings

At a breakfast or luncheon meeting, an event organiser prepares a meal for all attendees to enjoy while they get to know each other. The purpose of these meetings can vary. If you are a part of a group, you may meet to plan projects or discuss important subjects. Other times, the organiser may invite someone to speak at the event. During breakfast or luncheon meetings, you get to converse and connect with fellow professionals.

#### 7. Community service groups

Community service groups are where volunteers and donors can interact with one another. If you work for a non-profit, you may attend an event like this to get to know the people who support your cause. Likewise, volunteering for this kind of event is a great way to meet community members and increase your network of contacts. It's also a great way to give back to a good cause.

#### 8. Speed networking

Speed networking is a way for professionals to rapidly make connections with other professionals. Like speed dating, you meet one-on-one with another professional for a set period of time. During this meeting, you can introduce yourself, ask a few questions and share contact information. Event organisers may even provide you with prompts of what to talk about. After the time is complete, you move on to another person. Many colleges also offer speed networking events where students can briefly meet one-on-one with industry professionals to get career advice and share their resumes.

#### 9. Workshops

Workshops are a chance to develop your skills while growing your network. Most workshops focus on a particular topic or skill. During a workshop, you may watch a presentation or do more interactive learning. For example, if you were to go to a team-building workshop, you may participate in different team-building activities. Likewise, a coding workshop could be a chance to work on your coding while getting hands-on help from another professional.

#### 10. Roundtable discussions

Roundtable discussions are when a small group of people meets to discuss or debate a particular subject. It's a great way to share your opinions and thoughts while learning other perspectives. The goal of roundtable discussions is to facilitate respectful conversations. While you are speaking, everyone is focused on what you're saying. When it's the next person's turn, you direct your attention to them. There is often a portion for follow-up questions and closing remarks.

### Getting ready to be part of it

When attending a networking or other professional event, you will meet lots of people in a very short time and will want to remember some information about them. Wear something with pockets so you have a place to stow business cards. Come prepared to jot notes in a small notebook or Blackberry. Consider creating and bringing your own business cards.

Most networking events involve food, drink, and lots of handshakes. Consider balancing a notebook under your plate or keeping your Blackberry in a pocket. Don't carry both a drink and a plate at the same time. You will need at least one hand free at all times in order to shake hands with people you meet.

Your dress should be professional, sharp and modest.

### How to network like a pro

Knowing how to network can help you create a lot of opportunities for your enterprise. You may get new clients, customers, suppliers or strengthen your skills by attending events with people in your industry or field. There are a variety of ways to network in person and online. Business networking is the process of meeting others to exchange information, make new professional contacts and create helpful relationships. You can connect with someone who works in the same field or company you're interested in, or who could provide you with a reference or client in the future. Knowing how to network professionally will make it easier and faster for you to form valuable connections.

### How to network successfully

Learning the networking basics makes it easier to create helpful connections with others. Whether you attend business networking events in person or online, following these networking tips can increase your confidence:

1. Talk to new people at networking events.
2. Attend new events.
3. Create authentic relationships.
4. Bring a memorable business card.
5. Be confident.
6. Stay connected.
7. Help others in your network.
8. Revisit older connections.
9. Find new connections online.
10. Form your own networking group.

1. Talk to new people at networking events

Take full advantage of a networking event by meeting as many new people as you can. Making new contacts can expand your network and increase your chances of receiving a new opportunity.



When you attend a new event, attempt to greet five new people per hour, so you can spend about 10 minutes talking to each person. During that time, you can converse about basic topics, such as your professions or hobbies, to see if you can create a common connection.

## 2. Attend new events

You may tend to go to the same type of networking events where you already know many of the attendees. However, it may be beneficial to attend other events, where you can meet new people and diversify your interests. There are many sources online for finding new networking events. Your local community might have a social media page that advertises different functions near you. If you attended college, there might be a university alumni website that lists potential networking events.

## 3. Create authentic relationships

Networking often involves talking to different people at an event. Creating several quality connections may be more beneficial than engaging in multiple quick conversations, since you are more likely to create a lasting impression during a longer, more meaningful discussion. If you are at a networking event and feel that you may be able to form a valuable connection with someone, try to find shared goals and interests that could extend the conversation.

## 4. Bring a memorable business card

Most people who attend a networking event will bring business cards to exchange. Many business cards are the same size and follow the same colour scheme and format. To stand out, you might consider creating unique business cards that relate to your business. For example, if you are a photographer, you could design your business cards to look like a camera or include samples of your work on the back. A creative business card may make people more inclined to connect with you again after the event.

## 5. Be confident

Being self-assured during a networking event can help you successfully navigate the occasion and create more useful connections. When preparing for a networking event, rehearse responses to common questions you might encounter when you speak to new people, such as, "Tell me about yourself," or "How long have you been in this business?" Having an answer ready will ensure your delivery is smooth.

During the event, initiate conversations with others, offer a firm handshake if appropriate, stand up straight and maintain eye contact throughout the conversation. These forms of nonverbal communication show your confidence and can make it easier to maintain a conversation.

## 6. Stay connected

Once you have a new relationship, it is important to continue to build and strengthen the foundation. You can call, text or email a new contact a few days after the networking event to express your pleasure in meeting them. Make an

offer to meet with them at a specific time to continue your conversation about a shared interest. Try to reconnect with them every few months by emailing an interesting article or industry-related news.

#### 7. Help others in your network

Part of networking is offering help to your connections, which can show you are generous and dependable. Contacts may be more likely to reciprocate your generosity by recommending you for an opportunity that matches your qualifications. When communicating with people in your network, actively listen to them to determine if they need assistance in finding a new job or expanding their client base. You may be able to help them by acting as a reference or providing them contact information for a hiring manager or potential customer.

#### 8. Revisit older connections

When you network, you will create varying levels of relationships based on common interests and goals. In some instances, you may communicate infrequently with people you do not share a strong connection with. Maintaining your connections is an important part of networking, since you may be able to provide each other with valuable industry information, such as job openings or client referrals. To keep an open line of communication, contact those in your network you haven't spoken to in a few months. You can ask for updates on their career or if they'd like to meet in person to reconnect.

#### 9. Find new connections online

While many people professionally network in person, you can also find new connections online. Connecting with people online can help you create a larger and more expansive network. If you have a professional profile on a social media platform, you could set a goal of adding five new people each week. You could add people such as colleagues or individuals you met during in-person networking events. It can also be useful to try to connect to experts in your field. If the expert posts content regularly, you may learn valuable information that you can apply to your work. If you want to make a more personal connection, try sending them a private message with a question that relates to your industry or a comment about how you admire their work.

#### 10. Form your own networking group

When you form connections at an event, try inviting a small group to meet again at a later date. Consider planning interactive activities that can help people feel more comfortable creating conversation. Forming your own networking group can help you develop closer relationships with individuals and create potential opportunities.

### Networking Do's and don'ts

#### Do....

- Thank your network partners and keep in touch with them
- Develop lasting relationships, not just contacts

- Always look for ways to help the people in your network
- Remember to ask two important questions, "What is your story?" and "What advice would you have for me as I consider entering this field?"

### **Don't....**

- Brag or exaggerate the truth in your conversations
- Spend too much time in unfocused conversation; appreciate your partner's time
- Gossip or share inappropriately with network partners; stay professional and relevant
- Allow your networking relationship to become one-sided
- Ask personal questions or questions about money/ salary
- Even think about asking for a job; keep the focus on gathering information and advice
- Forget to thank your network partners and keep in touch with them

### **Exercises for introverts to overcome their fear of networking**

Being able to network is one of the most important skills you can have in today's business world. Of course, not everyone has the outgoing personality that makes networking second nature. Introverts in particular might have a tough time when faced with a crowd of unknown people, as they tend to keep to themselves and despise small talk. However, there are many ways introverts can use their personality to their advantage which may not seem obvious at first but will ultimately lead to successful networking sessions.

#### **1. Practice and Rehearse**

The most introverted among us have to practise even the simplest interactions. I know that even when I make a phone call to a pizza place, I have to repeat my order aloud a few times before actually dialling the number. Before a networking session, it's important for introverts to know exactly how they're going to present themselves, and what they're going to say. Of course, you don't want to sound robotic, but you don't want to get caught making awkward pauses and using too many "um's" and "ah's."

#### **2. Do your research**

Along with practising what you're going to say, introverts should also research the people they'll be meeting. I don't mean you should stalk them out on Facebook or anything but having specific talking points for each individual you meet will certainly put you at an advantage. Instead of going into a networking session blind, know what position people hold, any awards they've won, or anything else you can find out about them through the company's webpage.



Again, you'll avoid awkward pauses and dead spots in conversation, and you'll impress the company with how much you already know about them.

### 3. Keep conversations short and simple

You also don't want to let conversations go too long. Introduce yourself, discuss the important talking points you've planned in advance, and move on to another introduction. Don't let the conversation get stale, as you don't want to end up panicking when you run out of things to talk about. Again, don't be robotic, but don't make it obvious that you painstakingly planned out every word that comes out of your mouth. You don't want to appear phoney, either.

### 4. Focus on your strengths

As an introvert, you most likely have a ton of strengths that you never gloat about. Now isn't the time to hide your skills and abilities. Do your best to bring up past accomplishments and future goals, showing everyone that you have the ambition and drive that would make you an asset to the company.

### 5. Bring a colleague

It might help if you bring a work friend along, as well. Maybe they know some of the people that will be there, giving you an "in" with them. Maybe you might know someone they don't know, and it'll look good for you if you're able to connect with others as well. At the very least, it can't hurt to have someone to talk to during dead times — that way, you won't look like you're completely alone and unapproachable.

### 6. Draw others to you

As I just mentioned, you want to be approachable. Don't stand off in the corner waiting for others to come to you, and definitely do your best to not look bored or nervous. Your body language says a lot about who you are as a person. Make eye contact with everyone you come across, and make sure to smile and nod throughout the networking session. As an introvert, it's definitely hard to invite people into your world, but it's absolutely necessary when trying to further your career.

### 7. Listen carefully

Listening is an introvert's strong suit, so put it to good use. Take stock of everything that's said to you throughout the session and take note of who said what. Notice the little things, such as if a person discusses his interest in a certain sports team or music genre. Showing that you pay attention to details will go a long way.

### 8. Form close relationships

Since you've listened closely to everything everyone has said, you can follow up at a later time with those you feel you have common bonds with. Again, this is another strength of the common introvert. Although it's difficult to put yourself out there, it's much easier to make close connections with those who share your interests and viewpoints. Seek these people out in the days following a

networking session, and make sure they know just how much you appreciated their company.

## **Additional information**

Women European Entrepreneurs Networks

Name	Website URL	
WEGATE	<a href="https://www.wegate.eu/">https://www.wegate.eu/</a>	WEgate is an online platform that aims to help women entrepreneurs start and build up their business with the help of our engaging community and knowledge sharing. We want to enable them to find the best networking opportunities, experienced mentorship and a space for growth.
AFAEMME	<a href="http://www.afaemme.org/">http://www.afaemme.org/</a>	AFAEMME is the FEDERATION OF MEDITERRANEAN BUSINESSWOMEN ASSOCIATIONS, launched in 2002 in Barcelona (Spain). AFAEMME is currently comprised of 63 businesswomen organisations from Mediterranean countries. AFAEMME is a coordinator of Euro Mediterranean business, gender equality projects and ground-breaking research, it serves as a networking platform for businesswomen and women entrepreneurs in the Euro Mediterranean region and a Lobby for strengthening gender equality and facilitating the access of women to decision-making positions in the economy.
WEP	<a href="http://www.womenentrepreneurshipplatform.org/">http://www.womenentrepreneurshipplatform.org/</a>	The Women Entrepreneurship Platform is the European network association representing, promoting, supporting, and advocating on behalf of women entrepreneurs across Europe. WEP is, since 2015, a registered international non-profit organisation based in Brussels, Belgium.
EUROCHAMBRES WOMEN NETWORK (EWN)	<a href="https://www.eurochambres.eu/">https://www.eurochambres.eu/</a>	An energetic and substantial part of the European Women chamber network: A place to create new connections and get the support and inspiration for our entrepreneurial journey.

		<p>The EUROCHAMBERS Women's Network members come together to share knowledge, best practices, contacts, and benefit from strategic partnerships.</p>
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## Practices / references /sources

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/types-of-networking-events>