

## The 10 Secrets of Networking

- 1. Have the tools to network with you at all times.** These include business cards, brochures about your business, and a pocket-size business card file containing cards of other professionals to whom you can refer new business. You may wish to also have a name badge.
- 2. Set a goal for the number of people you'll meet.** Identify a reachable goal based on attendance and the type of group. If you feel inspired, set a goal to meet 15 to 20 people, and make sure you get all their cards. If you don't feel so hot, shoot for less. In either case, don't leave until you've met your goal.
- 3. Act like a host, not a guest.** A host is expected to do things for others, while a guest sits back and relaxes. Volunteer to help greet people. If you see visitors sitting, introduce yourself and ask if they would like to meet others. Act as a conduit.
- 4. Listen and ask questions.** Remember that a good networker has two ears and one mouth and uses them proportionately. After you've learned what another person does, tell them what you do. Be specific but brief. Don't assume they know your business.
- 5. Don't try to close a deal.** Never, ever! These events are not meant to be a vehicle to hit on businesspeople to buy your products or services. Networking is about developing relationships with other professionals. Meeting people at events should be the beginning of that process, not the end of it.
- 6. Give referrals whenever possible.** The best networkers believe in the "givers gain" philosophy (what goes around comes around). If I help you, you'll help me and we'll both do better as a result of it. In other words, if you don't genuinely attempt to help the people you meet, then you are not networking effectively. If you can't give someone a bona fide referral, try to offer some information that might be of interest to them (such as details about an upcoming event).
- 7. Exchange business cards.** Ask each person you meet for two cards—one to pass on to someone else and one to keep. This sets the stage for networking to happen.
- 8. Manage your time efficiently.** Spend 10 minutes or less with each person you meet, and don't linger with friends or associates. If your goal is to meet a given number of people, be careful not to spend too much time with any one person. When you meet someone interesting with whom you'd like to speak further, set up an appointment for a later date.
- 9. Write notes on the backs of business cards you collect.** Record anything you think may be useful in remembering each person more clearly. This will come in handy when you follow up on each contact.
- 10. Follow up!** You can obey the previous nine commandments religiously, but if you don't follow up effectively, you will have wasted your time. Drop a note or give a call to each person you've met. Be sure to fulfill any promises you've made.