

THE ART OF NETWORKING

Four Tips to Becoming a Master Networker

► BY JOE DOYLE, OREGON '03

You're at your company picnic munching on chips and talking with your co-workers when you notice the CEO of your company near the grill. Two days ago, an office memo was released stating that he was looking for a new project manager for a high profile client. You know you will be a perfect fit, but you're not sure if the CEO even knows your name. Besides, even if you had the guts to approach him right now you wouldn't know what to say.

Does this sound familiar? If it does, chances are that you're lousy at networking.

There are many misconceptions about networking. From the moment you graduate from college, if you haven't already, you will be confronted with people telling you, "It's not what you know; it's who you know." First, it would have been nice to know this BEFORE you got up to your neck in student loans, and second, they've got it all wrong. That statement should be changed to: "It's not who you know, it's who knows you." You can have thousands of friends on Facebook, but it means nothing if those people don't keep you in the forefront of their minds. It's my job to make sure that when a big opportunity comes up, the decision makers think of you first.

There are four key elements to social networking, two of which most people don't understand. These elements are **how to deal with approach anxiety** and **how to give value**. Master these two ideas and you will have the power to master both your professional life as well as your social life.

Approach anxiety is that little voice in your head giving you reasons and excuses for not striking up a conversation with the beautiful woman you see across the room or your CEO near the grill.

"They look busy."

"I don't know what to say."

"I'm too shy."

"I'm just an office drone."

These are just a few of the self limiting beliefs that voice can instill in your brain keeping your feet firmly planted on the ground. I have news for you, if you don't believe in yourself, how do you expect your CEO to believe in you? It's time to look at yourself like a business. Great social networkers are great at selling themselves. To gain that sense of self worth you must invest in your life just like any entrepreneur would invest in his company. Start creating small attainable goals and follow through with them. As corny as this might sound, doing these small tasks like reading before bed, running for thirty minutes everyday, or learning to play that musical instrument you've always wanted to play, will give you a sense of accomplishment. One of my many mantras I repeat daily is, "Believe in your heart of hearts that you are worthy of greatness."

Now that you are beginning to invest in your self worth and confidence, we need to get you from point A to point B. In any social situation you should employ something I call the "Three Second Rule." If you see somebody you would like to speak with, you must approach him or her within three seconds. The longer you and that little voice debate about the pros and cons of speaking with your target, the more stress is added to the situation. This is quite possibly the only time where not thinking before you act can work out in your favor. As you approach your potential new contact, be sure that you are at a slight angle. If you approach somebody with your shoulders square to them, you are going to convey that you

have too much interest in that person. This will subconsciously raise their guard and give away the fact that you might be looking for something from them. We want our new contact to be as relaxed and comfortable with us as possible.

Now that you are standing near them, you'd better start talking or else things are going to get awkward fast. It's time to **give value**. There is nothing worse than a leech. These people are constantly taking without giving back. The best way to avoid being "that guy" is to resist any journalistic urge to rattle off questions. This forces your potential contact to give the conversation value. It's **your** time to shine. Here are some tips to help you provide value to the conversation:

- Enter the conversation with equal or slightly higher energy than the group. This way you start the interaction off by giving the gift of energy to the group.
- Have confidence and take charge.
- Make sure to speak to the entire group, and not single out your potential contact.
- Don't start the conversation off talking about work. These people spend eight to ten hours a day living and breathing their profession. The last thing that they want to talk about when they are off the clock is work.
- Once the ice has been broken, throw in a false time constraint to make your contact comfortable and not wondering when you are going to leave. "I can only stay a second," is my go to false time constraint.

Now that everyone is engaged and knows you aren't going to follow them around, demonstrate your value through stories. Rather than saying, "I know I would make a great project manager for this client," show them by telling stories of past projects that you helped succeed. You've now established you are a value giver and not a value taker, so feel free to pepper in a few of those questions you were dying to ask. Now that you aren't relying on them, you will find that the answers to those questions surface through the course of the interaction.

The final two steps to becoming a successful at networking are **exchanging contact information** and **following up with your new contact**.

Asking for someone's contact information is easier than you think. "I've enjoyed our conversation. How can we continue it?" Using this exact phrasing takes the pressure of both you and your new contact by allowing your contact to decide how to stay in touch. They can decide to exchange phone numbers, business cards, or e-mails. In reality, it doesn't matter what contact information you get because the goal is to see them on a different occasion. An important point to remember is that when you do receive the contact informa-

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tion, stick around for at least five minutes. This will insure that your contact won't think that the whole point of interacting with them was to get their contact information.

If you haven't already set up another encounter during your conversation make it a point to **follow up with your new contact the next day**. This will ensure that they remember who you are and where they met you. Also, be aware that when your new contact receives your call or e-mail, they won't be in the same mindset as when you met them. It's your job to get them back there. I will usually bring up an inside joke we shared from our first meeting. Sometimes your schedule won't match up with theirs and you run the risk of not being able to meet right away. Not to worry. You don't want to seem too needy. Remember that you are a high value person with a busy schedule as well. Reinitiate the conversation with your contact in two weeks and then again a month after that. This will keep you fresh in their minds.

I'll leave you with one last networking tip. Never hold a drink and a hors d'oeuvre plate at the same time. With both hands full, you will not be ready to shake hands with anyone or receive a business card. You always want to be prepared in case that CEO happens to approach you at the company picnic.

Joe Doyle graduated in 2006 from the University of Oregon as a member of the Theta Rho chapter of Delta Sig. A year after graduating, Doyle appeared on the hit VH1 reality series "The Pickup Artist," where he learned the art of social dynamics and networking. After placing third, he went on to teach seminars across the country to men who were looking to improve the social, romantic, and business aspects of their lives. For more information about participating in a seminar or his new e-book "Date Overweight: A Big Guy's Guide to Dating and Romance," you can contact him at bookjoed@gmail.com He currently resides in Los Angeles, California where he continues to pursue acting, and writing while working as the Public Relations Director for the social dynamics company The Stylelife Academy (stylelife.com).