

Top Ten Steps to Networking

Anyone can talk with their established contacts, peers and friends. How do you expand your network to attain the most value, especially if you consider yourself to be more reserved and introverted? In a recent survey by career services firm DBM, 61% of respondents cited networking as the source of their new jobs. This percentage was 10 times greater than the percentage who found jobs through Internet job sites and print advertisements. Good networking skills **can** be learned and are far easier than you might think.

STMA members tell us that networking is one of the top reasons to join STMA and the upcoming conference and exhibition has more than 15 hours dedicated for member-to-member networking. Here are 10 easy to implement techniques to help you build relationships in your network.

1. Fight the temptation to just 'hang out' with the people you already know. The more diverse people you build relationships with, the more opportunities will arise, both for your own benefit and for theirs. Say your hellos, chat for a few quick minutes and then make plans to get together at some other time (maybe even later that night) to REALLY catch up. The message is, "Yes, I really want to spend more time with you, but not right now - I want to network a bit, first."
2. Set a networking goal. For example, tell yourself that you want to meet 10 new people during the STMA conference. Keep track of that goal, and each day remind yourself about the number of new people you must meet.
3. Know that a great way to network is to simply introduce yourself to anyone who is standing alone.
4. Engage them by being curious about them - ask something about who they are, who they work for, who they know, etc., or start with a statement: "I'm interested in hearing about how you ..."
Get engaged by asking questions you don't already know the answers to.
5. Ask for a business card so that you can remember their names, have a record of who you talked to and how to reach them, and you can use the back of the card to write down what you want to remember and what might be a relevant next step to take. If you didn't exchange business cards and you run into someone you already met but can't remember their name, simply say "Hello again. Remind me of your name." Then remind them of your name.
6. Give the people you talk with your undivided attention.
7. Treat everyone as equals. There is no real value in title or prestige alone. Value is in the information and support people can give, and that often comes from surprising sources. A network is not a bureaucracy or a hierarchy. It is a level and fair playing field. Give just to give. Don't give with the sole purpose of getting something back.
8. When the conversation lulls, move on - "Excuse me, there's someone I want to meet (that person standing alone over there)," is a perfectly acceptable thing to say. Smile and then walk away.
9. Be a network catalyst. Introduce two people you know to each other. This is the ultimate in flattery when someone takes the time out of their day to make the effort to make introductions.
10. Say 'thank you' for those who have shared their time and advice.

Sources: Donna Messer, ConnectUs Communications; *Diane Darling*; *Barry Zweibel*, [GottaGettaCoach!](#)