

Seven Rules of Networking

1. Smile

A smile is a universal welcome sign. A smile allows the other person to know you're approachable.

2. Look the person in the eye

It's a compliment to look at someone sincerely. It's also a way to connect with someone new in the shortest time possible. We all get an uncomfortable feeling when we're talking with someone who looks over our shoulders or around us.

3. Listen

One of the greatest compliments you can give people you speak with is to let them know you're listening to everything they say. Let them tell you their stories. You'll probably learn something new from them.

4. Be aware of your body language

First impressions are lasting ones. Monitor your posture and physical movement before meeting someone for the first time. In most cases, you need to loosen up because meeting new people can be a tense experience. Find ways to relax and reduce stress before networking.

5. Avoid being pushy

Be careful of coming on too strong or too desperate for a contract. People's instincts tell them when someone is "too hungry," and alarms go off because we all want to be associated with winners, not losers.

6. Give genuine compliments

When you listen carefully to people, often they will mention an achievement they are proud of. Think for a moment and find a way to acknowledge this.

7. Use business cards wisely

Business cards are more than names. Ask for people's cards and treat them as fine treasures. You might even make a note on these cards to help you remember something distinctive about these people's cards, giving you direction when you follow up.