

# FIVE WAYS TO SURVIVE A NETWORKING EVENT

Many people dread the idea of having to attend a networking session, but **Rupert Wesson** from Debrett's has five simple ways to make the most of it



## 1. PREPARE WITH A PURPOSE

'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.' It seems unlikely that Benjamin Franklin was thinking specifically of networking events when he observed this, but that doesn't make it any less applicable.

People often attend networking events without really stopping to think why they are there. Without a plan, all you will be doing is hoovering up the canapés and passing the time of day.

Instead, arm yourself with a plan to build your brand and that of the company you work for. Think about how you are going to describe what you do in a quick, simple and interesting way. Speaking with confidence and clarity will draw people to you and make any conversation more meaningful.

## 2. HAVE FUN

Just as important as preparing your professional objectives in advance of a networking event is to go with the expectation of having a good time

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- that way you probably will.

While it's generally in your best interest to attend in a professional mindset, this doesn't mean that 100% of conversations should be centred on work. An easy trick for building rapport is to find common ground. If this comes in the form of being in the same industry or having a shared client, that's great, but if it comes from a shared interest outside of work - whether tennis or Yorkshire terriers - that's fine too.

## 3. LISTEN MORE

It is a truism to say that when you are interested you become more interesting. Try to avoid asking a question and then allowing your mind to drift to when the next tray of canapés will be coming around. Instead, actively listen to what the person has said, and respond. People will relax and engage with you more if you ask great questions and give them time to speak.

If you have a good understanding about what people do, you will be able to adopt 'pro-networker' status and help connect people in the room.

## 4. HELP OTHERS

On which subject, think about every conversation as a chance to see how you can help others (after all, no one wants to listen to your lengthy sales pitch). You can be really helpful

by connecting people already in the room whom you have just met, or by connecting them to your wider network.

## 5. KEEP MOVING

There is a fine line between quantity and quality, and it will be more beneficial to have a small number of meaningful conversations with potential contacts than to leave the event with a pocket full of business cards you have no intention of following up on.

At the same time, you will usually get more from an event if you are able to keep moving and speak to different people, so once you have got to know someone don't cling to them like a new best friend forever - just swap details and politely move on. ●

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