

Five Tips to Demystify Networking

Article By:

David S. Sanders

Networking requires energy and can feel “icky” at times, but putting it into practice in your daily life can increase your comfort and help you build connections with new people you meet.

My goal in every interaction with someone new is to come away with one thing I can follow up on with that person. Connecting over something business related is ideal, but if I can't find anything then I'll focus on something personal. Either way, it could end up being the catalyst for a mentoring relationship.

Here are five tips from an article I recently [shared with University of Michigan students](#):

1. Google is your friend, but do not stalk people or tell them you know their kids' birthdays. LinkedIn, on the other hand, is fair game, and you should use anything you find there to connect and lead into other questions.
2. Have a jar full of conversation starters ready to go. Start by asking someone about their career or what they do for fun, or use one of your own life experiences to ask an open-ended question.
3. Your handshake will be your first impression in almost every interaction. You don't want to have the vice grip but you also don't want to be the dead fish.
4. Don't be the first to get to the bar or punch table. Don't be the last to leave. And if you ever find yourself dividing the number of drinks you've had by the number of the hours you've been there, it's time to leave.
5. Practice among your friends by having them ask you questions – the more absurd the better – and listen to and rework your answer until it doesn't seem forced.

The most important lesson I've learned since graduating is how far you get in life just by saying 'Hi, How are you?' everywhere you go and then waiting for the answer. Taking the time to be considerate, friendly, and asking people how they are makes a world of difference.

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