

# Networking Tips, from Stacey Martin

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## What is networking?

Networking is being part of a business community where the objective is to build relationships with a view to helping others. Rather than looking at what you can GET from a connection, look at what you can GIVE, how you may be able to help and add value.

## How do you tap into networks?

**Where to network** – your networking strategy will guide you on who you should meet and therefore which organizations and associations are aligned. Commit and attend regularly and follow-up to build reliability and trust

**Ask how can you add value** - what does your ideal client look like, what are some current issues and challenges, what do they need right now? Also know how others can support you

**Refer your network** – when asked for help, think about your networks expertise and arrange introductions. It could be a simple email or coordinating a meeting

**Ask your network** – when you need help, call or email someone in your network. Collaborate with colleagues or other professionals.

## How can you maximize your networking?

**Run networks** - set up your own or apply to be on the board or committee of an existing network. Help out at events, or offer to sponsor a network that is aligned with your objectives

**Network the networks** – promote relevant events through your networks

**Invite clients along** – there may be a speaker your connections would be interested in providing additional value

**Don't pre-judge anyone you meet** - people do business with people they like and trust, and they refer them. It's about making friends in a business context.

## Have a Linked In Profile

Networking on-line is like off-line – you wouldn't stand in a corner at a function and not talk to anyone:

**Build a presence** – your online profile should have a photo and say what you do and how you help, and start by listening to the conversation, and when you're comfortable join in by "sharing" articles

**Contribute to the conversation** - "comment" on articles that resonate, and then extend the conversation by producing your own content, remembering it's about adding value, not selling.

## Tips for attending networking events

**1. Have a networking strategy** – what are your business goals, who are your ideal clients, what do you need right now? Network in the right places – where there are potential centres of influence, clients and others that could help you.

**2. Arrive early** - or leave late to maximize networking opportunities. Connect with the hosts, the speaker and try not to sit with your colleagues.

**3. Act like a host** – approach and be approachable. Smile and be welcoming to other attendees who may also be nervous.

**4. Have some conversation starters** – keep up to date with current events, and what's happening in your industry. Ensure that anyone that has an interaction with you has a positive experience.

**5. Ask insightful questions** - what's happening in their world? How can you help or connect?

*“What's brought you along to the event?”*

*“What does your ideal client look like?”*

*“What do you do when you're not working?”*

**6. Exchange business cards** – where you have a quality conversation and would like to keep in touch, exchange cards. Make a note on the back of where you met, something personal to remember them by, and any follow-up actions.

**7. Exit gracefully** – a simple exit, no need for excuses like getting a drink or going to the bathroom. Don't say you've seen someone more important or interesting than them!

*“Nice to meet you – hope you enjoy the function”.*

*“I don't want to monopolize your time ...”*

*“We seem to have some areas of common interest – let's keep in touch”*

**8. Follow-up** – set aside some time the next day to follow-up with a personal note via email or Linked IN to keep in touch, or arrange a meeting or mutual introduction.

***“Networking is a life skill not just something you do at a networking function”***

***– Stacey Martin***