



invisibleadvantage

“Making networking work...”

Why network?

“I wish I’d known how important having a good network is earlier in my career. Things would have been a lot easier!” - Managing Partner, Global Professional Services Firm

Everything you want to achieve is made easier by having a good network. The old saying ‘It’s not *what* you know, it’s *who* you know’ is still true, but you could also say ‘It’s not who you know - it’s who knows you’

It’s an excellent way to raise your profile and build your brand and reputation

It helps you to become ‘known for something’ (This is important both for clients and internally)

Networking gives you access to new information, advice and ideas

You can gain access to new opportunities and roles

It’s a great way of gaining, and building, credibility

You can get answers to, and opinions on, current work problems and challenges

You can quickly identify quality sales opportunities

It’s a great way to build client relationships

When you get it right, it’s great fun and builds genuine friendships!

“I hate networking!”

Train yourself to think of networking as ‘socialising with a purpose’. You’re not there to keep score, or ‘win’. You’re there to have interesting conversations, share professional expertise and advice, and exchange opportunities. In this way, everyone benefits.

Remember that many people find networking events awkward, stilted and false, so most people will be very happy if you make the first approach and say hello.

Remember the tip - ‘say hello to someone as soon as you walk into the room’. Don’t ‘select’ people when you first enter an event - leave that until later once you’ve ‘warmed-up’.

Common pitfalls to avoid:

Only talking to people you already know

Getting stuck with one person

Forgetting names

Not having a purpose, or clear goals

Breaking into conversations when the body language clearly says 'no thanks'.

Dismissing people as 'not useful'

Awkward silences

Not having an 'elevator pitch'

Not following up

Small talk

Remember - 'be interested, as well as interesting'. Great networkers *listen*.

Great networkers are experts at having interesting conversations based on what they share in common with other people - this doesn't just have to be about work.

Networking's golden rule - if you ask boring questions, you get boring answers

Use the prompts on the next two pages to inspire you to plan conversation starters and 'continuers'.

Small talk

Always have a few small-talk topics pre-prepared, just in case (current affairs, industry, the event you're at).

Check the day's newspaper for 'conversational prompts', especially around the themes on the next page.

Choose topics that can grow into 'big talk' and ask open questions, rather than yes/no questions.

Have a couple of prepared anecdotes 'The last time I was at one of these events...'

Love, money, leisure, health

- How do you feel about..?
- Where did you get started..?
- What do you think about..?
- How do you manage to..?
- “How do you see recent trends..?”
- What advice would you give about..?
- Who are you hoping to meet..?
- What wouldn't I know about..?

Moving on...

Getting stuck with one person for too long is a common networking problem. These ideas will help:

Don't be afraid to exit a conversation, give yourself mental permission to wrap a conversation up. The other person will probably be grateful too!

Use the team! Pass over to another team member, or look out for someone who might need rescuing!

Always leave a good impression - leave a business card with clients/potential clients.

Good phrases for moving on tend to be -

'Who else are you hoping to meet tonight?'

'Have you met X?'

'It's been great talking to you, I must catch X before she leaves'

'It's been good to talk, but I suppose we are both here to mingle...'

Remembering Names:

1. Listen! (Don't skip this part!)
2. Comment (Not always out loud!)
3. Repeat! (At least once, usually near the end of the conversation 'Lucy, it's been good to talk, have a great rest of the evening').

If you *do* forget a name, it's best not to bluff, just admit it and move on: 'Oh, sorry, remind me of your name..?'

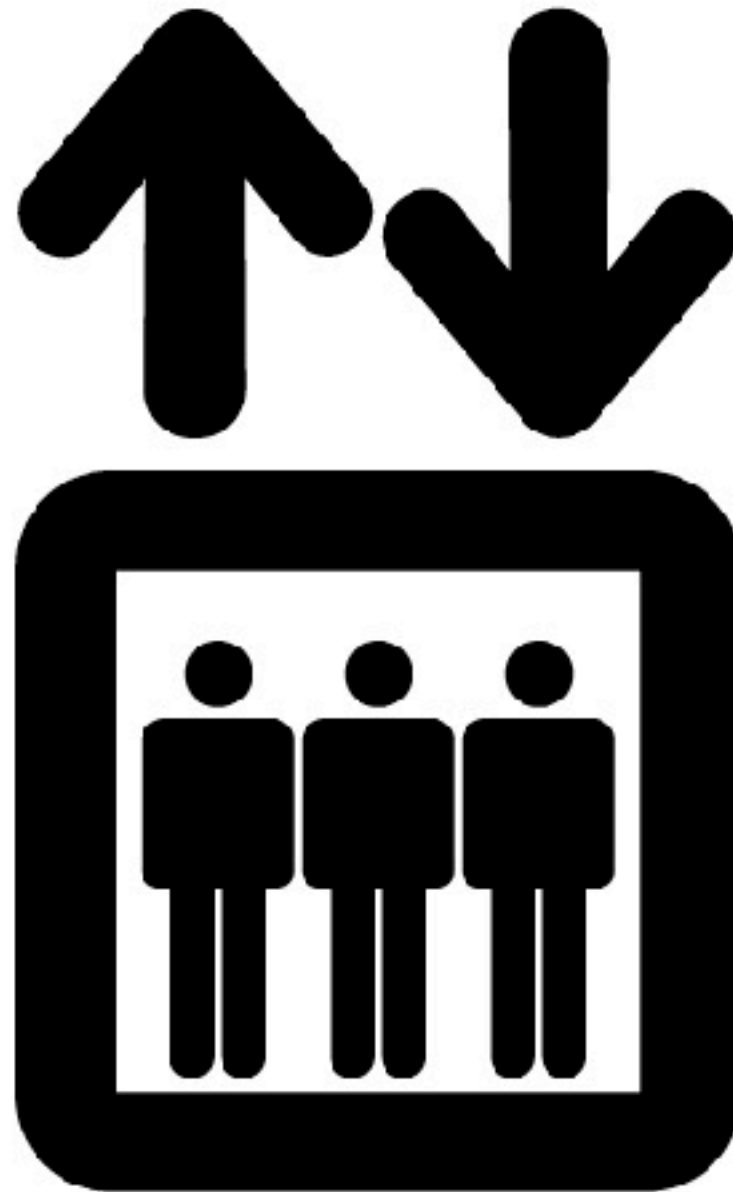
Use LinkedIn!

Attend training events to get the most out of LinkedIn - it's much more powerful than many people realise.

Remember people will check you out online - make sure your profile represents you at your best.

LinkedIn is an easy way to keep in touch with everyone, as you never need to check their contact details.

Remember 'weak links' - the people in your network who you are distantly connected to. LinkedIn is a great way to maintain a 'light touch' when staying in contact with these people.



Elevator pitch

An elevator pitch is a brief, credible summary that you can use when you first meet someone.

Avoid the common mistake of saying too much. A good elevator pitch should be *just* enough that the other person responds by asking for more information, or further contact.

A good elevator pitch will be about value as much as *how you do what you do*:

Use this sentence to help you focus on the simple value of what you do:

“At the heart of what I do is a simple idea ...”

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Goals

“If you don’t know where you’re going, how will you know if you’ve got there?”

Good networkers always have clear goals. Goals inspire and animate you, and make you feel more confident. They also help you measure your networking success.

At least one of your goals should be about how, and when, you’re going to follow-up.

1. Decide your goals *before* you’re at the event.
2. Research where appropriate. Look online and ask for the guest list.
3. Ask the host for help when you arrive. Hosts are usually delighted to help out, and it’s always easy for them to broker introductions.

Followup

According to Harvard Business Review, 67% of contacts made at networking events are not followed up!

Great networkers know that you're not just networking with the people you meet face-to-face, you're potentially networking with everyone they know too. When you follow up well, you increase your chances of influencing that extended network

Great networkers also know that a networking event is the *start* of a conversation, and that networking really begins with the follow up. After all, if you're not going to follow up, what's the point of being there in the first place?

1. Plan your follow up *before* the event.
2. Clarify your goals - what do you want this follow up to *do*?
3. Prioritise. You don't need to have lunch with everyone you meet, but you mustn't miss important opportunities.
4. Where possible, try and *give* value before *asking* for value. For example 'I really enjoyed our conversation last night, here's an article I think you'll find interesting, as it relates to what you were saying...', rather than 'I enjoyed our conversation last night, can we have a coffee sometime?'

Once you've established a conversation based on you providing something first, it's much easier to ask for the coffee!

I hope these notes are useful for you.

Keep in touch with me on LinkedIn, or email me if you have any further questions about networking.

Good luck at your next networking event!

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