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Five Tips For Creating Lasting Connections At Networking Events

February 25, 2019 | Carlinda Lee



The majority of us often converse with industry professionals at networking events, add them on LinkedIn and never reach out again. But by focusing on forming lasting connections, networking should grow your number of connections while providing new opportunities and perspectives.

Here are five tips for creating authentic, long-lasting relationships at networking events:

1. Research Attendees Prior To The Event

To make the most out of a networking opportunity, you will want to research the attendees and arrive prepared with questions that will help you gain valuable insights, spark interesting conversations and, because of the limited time, identify the attendees you most look forward to meeting.

Work-Related Questions Include:

- "What do you enjoy most about your role and organization?"
- "How did you get started in that direction?"
- "What projects are you currently tasked with?"
- "What are the biggest challenges you encounter in your role?"
- "What do you think of [industry news]?"

These questions are great ways of discovering how a professional entered a specific career and whether their career path is one you want to pursue. Being a student is the best time to network as many professionals are open and eager to help driven, enthusiastic young talent seeking learning opportunities. While it is great to showcase your curiosity, be sure to share your thoughts and opinions too – do not just interrogate them. Converse with them and relate their answers and anecdotes to some of your experiences.

The goal is to create rapport by asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions.

2. Get to Know Them As People (Not Just As Professionals)

With the majority of networking events occurring during the week, some professionals may not feel the most eager to talk repeatedly about work, especially after a long day. Casual questions are a great way to mix up the routine and get to know people as individuals. In fact, because most students ask career-related questions, asking more personal questions will help you stand out.

Casual Conversation Topics Include:

- Thoughts on the Event
- Hobbies
- Reading / TV Show / Movie / Podcast Recommendations
- Weekend / Travel Plans
- University / College Experience

The trick is to stay professional but also friendly and personable! Remember, professionals are more than just their titles. They are human and were once in your shoes! The most natural conversation starter that can lead to more personal

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conversation topics includes pointing out an aspect or the event and expanding on that. Even your conversation about the catering can lead to a discussion about favourite restaurants, travel, or hobbies. Don't fret, the conversation should come naturally and will continue on from your ice-breaker and career-related questions. The key is to stay curious.

3. Share Your Passions

While it is great to ask questions, be sure to share your passions and how you can provide value to their company! A key to potentially receiving opportunity through networking is by sharing your experiences and having a relatable conversation with the professional.

In fact, I recall sharing my student leadership experiences of hosting a hackathon sponsored by red bull, with an industry professional. I shared my passion for both events and student organizations, as well as the invaluable business development skills I gained. Through this conversation topic, the industry professional related to my passions by sharing her hackathon experience as a judge where she sampled a different brand of energy drink. Later, this conversation led to a coffee chat and, as luck would have it, an interview for my current role.

4. Follow-up for a Coffee Chat

It can be tough for professionals to remember everyone they conversed with, so be sure to schedule a follow-up coffee chat with them to truly build a long-lasting connection and continue on from your previous conversation. Be sure to not only dive deeper into their career experiences, goals and passions but also more conversational topics to develop a more personable and memorable relationship. What makes meeting for a coffee so effective is that it is a rarer occurrence and you aren't competing with other event attendees for the professional's attention. This translates to a greater chance you will be remembered by the professional and that you are top of mind in the future when a suitable opportunity becomes available.

If the conversation is going well, you can also ask the professional for introductions to other great people, like themselves, that you can speak to.

5. Keep in Touch

To ensure a long-lasting relationship, be sure to connect with them on LinkedIn to keep in touch, follow-up and provide more value – whether that be engaging with their content or sharing relevant content to them. I personally connect with professionals via LinkedIn, the more professional platform, although a couple of social media marketers have added me on Facebook as well.

Regardless of the channel, keep in touch naturally, aim to provide value while building rapport, and steer away from routine follow-ups without a purpose to avoid sounding unauthentic.

But most importantly, to create a good impression at any networking event, remember to be authentic, positive and open to advice or feedback! Networking events are social events too, so don't forget to have friendly, natural conversations and treat professionals like people, not resources. Keep in mind, there are many opportunities to network outside of events too, like through our FREE informational interviews with volunteer industry professionals, your professors, and extracurricular activities.

Good luck and keep connecting!

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