

How to 'Work a Room'

Goals of 'working a room' during a business-related networking event:

Connection and Assessment

Foster MBA Student

Connect

To make a number of business connections that can

1. Build your network
2. Open doors for the future
3. Clarify career opportunities

Recruiter or Business Contact

Assess

1. Evaluate social acumen
2. Determine if you would fit in their organization
3. Decide if they like you

Successful networking requires:

- Perspective
 - ✓ Understand the goal of the event from the host perspective
 - ✓ Know who will be attending this event
 - ✓ Form your perspective and your plan
- Preparation
 - ✓ RSVP if a response is requested
 - ✓ Plan your attire
 - ✓ Research the host company, industry or association
 - ✓ Prepare 'small talk'
 - ✓ Practice your elevator pitch/positioning statement(s)
 - ✓ Develop and project a genuine interest in others
 - ✓ Eat something before attending – the event is not about the food
- Performance
 - ✓ You have 10 seconds to make a first impression, be ready

Create a positive first impression:

1. Attire

- Clarify attire requested – business casual or business professional (suit)
- Clothes clean and pressed, shoes shined
- Check Hygiene (hair, breath, lipstick on teeth, etc.)
- Avoid the 'Five O'clock shadow' look
- Avoid perfume and cologne
- Do not let your attire be a distraction
- Wear your Foster nametag, if appropriate. Wear on your right side.

2. Eye contact

- Maintain steady gaze, don't stare shift or roam
- Look away only to greet, nod or smile at a newcomer to the group

- While speaking, maintain equal eye contact among group members
3. Handshake
 - Use the only appropriate handshake
 - Don't 'rush' into a handshake
 - Always stand for a handshake (women and men)
 4. Greeting
 - Take the initiative and introduce yourself
 - "Hello, I'm _____"
 - Extend your hand to offer a handshake
 - Listen to the person's name
 - Respond using the person's name, "It's nice to meet you, John"

Introduce others

- If one person is of more senior status, say the name of the senior person first; 'Anne Johnson, I would like to introduce Jack Harris'
Make eye contact with each as you state his or her name
Add a line of information to help begin a conversation
- **Tip:** Talk to the "more important" person first by starting out with their name: "Ms. Greater Importance", I would like to introduce you to "Mr. Lesser Importance."
- If there is no significant position difference, the order of introduction is unimportant

Small talk

- Prepare four or five items of general interest; local event or attraction, books, new movies, sports, and yes... the weather
- Use your prepared items to introduce conversation, fill gaps in discussion and to allow others to get to know you
- Listen and convey genuine interest
- Remain positive and upbeat
- Include others as they approach the group
- The pace and content of your input should mirror the group
- Three to five minute conversation, then move on. Extended conversations exclude others and prevent others from mingling

Mingle

- Wear your nametag, on the right hand side
- Warm up, get food or drink (not both), survey the room, find a friendly face or group
- Begin to work your plan
- Easiest to approach a single person or larger group
- Don't hesitate to ask your initial contacts to introduce you to others if they know the people you are hoping to meet; people like to be helpful
- Think 'reciprocity', how can you help others

- When entering a group, avoid offering an immediate comment, assess the flow of the conversation
- Wait for a break in the conversation to introduce yourself
- Keep your right hand free to offer a handshake
- Carry your beverage in your left hand to avoid a damp handshake
- Use a prepared 'exit line' to continue mingling
- Be prepared to offer your business card first and usually people respond with their own

Entering and Exiting interactions

Manage your time with different people and groups, being respectful of their time and obligations.

Entrance language:

- Introduce yourself to individuals: "Joan, I don't believe I have had the pleasure of meeting you. I am Robert Warren, a Foster MBA student."
- Approach groups of people –with thoughtful timing and planning—and a segue into the conversation. "Hi, I'm Jean Marie Wolf, a Foster MBA Student. If I may, I'd like to join in on your discussion of sustainability."
- Welcome newcomer to group by turning towards them—while making eye contact, smiling and gesturing them your way. ""Everyone, this is Doris Yuen. Doris, please join us in talking about the Wall Street Journal article today on...."

Exiting language:

- "In the spirit of networking, I need to connect with a couple other people before the event concludes. I enjoyed talking with you and I would like to take you up on your offer to meet for coffee sometime soon."
- "Pardon me, but I want to make sure you have an opportunity to talk with others who are waiting. It was nice to meet you...."
- Initiate an introduction of a colleague or friend to the person or group from whom you are departing.
- Ask for and offer your business card as way of exiting if appropriate.

Business Card Exchange

- Ask for a business card, if you feel you have made a connection with the contact. (At some recruiting events, though, you will find that company reps do not give them out due to the overwhelming number of emails they will receive.)
- Take a moment to look at the card; this simple gesture indicates your interest in the person.
- Formal exchange of business cards involves handing and receiving the card with both hands.

Follow up

Write a thank you note of 3 – 4 sentences; can be done via email or a handwritten note.

- To the host or sponsor
- To anyone who extended an offer to help, advice or a kindness

- Should contain only gratitude not a request
- Use high quality paper of simple design if sending a handwritten note. Should NOT have “Thank you” printed on it. Use a folded note or flat card. Consider personalized stationery.
- Think through your wording carefully
- Use your best handwriting
- Email should be used if following up after an interview—due to time constraints and expectations.

Telephone:

- Only if you have been invited to call.

You can be 100% sure that you will have no idea which event, telephone call, conversation or contact will lead you to a job. Treat every person and situation with respect.