



Working the Room Checklist and Tips

- **Your Mindset.** It is important to give yourself a little pep talk before entering the room. You want your energy level to be up, your posture to be proud and of course smile. You also want to tell yourself “this is going to be a great meeting.”

TIP: I find the best way to do this is to first take three deep breaths before I get out of the car then I literally give my self a pep talk and review my agenda which I cover next.

- **Your Agenda.** Never attend a networking meeting without one. Your agenda should be very simple. First, how many new people are you going to meet? A good number is 3. A conservative number allows you some quality time with each person. This also avoids being perceived as “The guy or gal who gives everyone a business card whether they need one or not!” Second agenda item, sit with someone new. Most of us sit with the folks we know but will that expand our network? Last agenda item, send a follow-up note the next day to the three new people you met. I am totally amazed at how few people do this. I have found one of the biggest mistakes people make is not sending a follow-up note because the person is not in their career area. Absolutely crazy! It’s like IT folks can’t possibly know anyone in finance or a manufacturing professional can’t possibly know anyone in HR.
- **Food and Drink.** If you do both, at the same time, tell me how you are going to shake hands. And remember only bad things happen with finger food!

TIP: Resist the alcohol until you have successfully met your agenda goals, then it is a nice reward.

- **Approaching a Group.** As you approach a group, be sensitive to their body language and conversation. Why? They maybe are talking about something very personal or confidential. We have all blundered into these in our life, right? The tip-off is the conversation comes to a screeching halt. It is best to avoid this embarrassment. However if you find yourself in this situation just say something like, “this looks serious, I will catch up with you guys later” and excuse yourself.

- **Your Smile and Handshake.** Always enter the room or the small group with a smile, not a “Cheshire Cat” smile but a relaxed smile. I know you have heard this a million times but a firm handshake is very important. It conveys immediate confidence as does your smile.
- **Don’t Pitch.** First, introduce yourself and shake hands with everyone in the group, making solid eye contact with each person as you say your name. Talk slower than you normally would, this avoids having people ask you to repeat your name. This is a very subtle icebreaker because as you are introducing yourself the others are already beginning to think about what they are going to ask you and 95% of the time it will be, “Bill what do you do?” Or “What brings you to tonight’s session?”

TIP: As important as your handshake and smile are, repeating everyone’s first name, as soon as they say it, is equally important and always makes a great impression.

- **Be Prepared To Pitch....Briefly!** 50 words or less but with high impact. For example: My career has been in IT where I have been able to leverage technology to reduce costs and dramatically improve the customer’s experience, most recently with Lex Electronics. (28 words) Another example: My last 10 years have been in product development at Johnson Controls where over 90% of our product launches met their market share objectives. (24 words) Would those pitches lead to some good questions from the listener(s)?
 - **Be Prepared To Share Some Targets.** The best way to get people to focus and be helpful is for you to name a specific company you are targeting **NOT** an industry group (way too vague). The company name allows us, as listeners, to immediately search our memory banks. In fact, if you say Merck or 3M, or Verizon, most of us immediately begin to think about who we know at those companies. It is almost an involuntary response.
- TIP:** Always good to let people know where you have contacts. This can be as simple as saying; I have some great contacts at American Express and Citicorp.
- **Listen First.** While we have to have our pitch at the ready the best “workers of the room” listen first. They listen to what the others are interested in, and then build on it. Think about this, if by listening first, you are able to give the other person some useful information or ideas, how willing are they going to be to help you?
 - **A Graceful Exit.** Be candid especially in networking gatherings. Think about it. Why is everyone there? So why not just say something like “hey you guys have been great but the networking rule book says I have to circulate.” Frankly, I think it is a bit of cop out to say, “I need to refresh my drink.”

Last, what ever you do..... have fun and good Luck!