

# STRATEGIES FOR Success

## Networking 101: Basics for Breaking the Ice

*Networking can become very easy when you know the right questions to ask.*

**A**re you at a loss on breaking the ice when you're meeting someone for the first time? If so, you could be jeopardizing some very important chances for networking.

Whenever you go to a Chamber of Commerce event, a Jaycees meeting, a restaurant or just about anywhere, the possibility to network bestows itself.

Unfortunately, though, there are apprehensions, which may occur as well. For instance, what should you do or say so as not to seem as though you're selling something?

The best way to overcome that fear is to ask questions. Don't ask sales questions; ask those that someone you are meeting for the first time would be willing to answer. These types of inquiries should be about themselves and their businesses. A good example is an open-ended question that permits you to undertake follow-up, which in turn will be greatly appreciated by your new contact. This will hopefully turn that person into a client with lots of referrals.

The following questions are amicable and can reveal something about the way the person thinks. You don't need to ask all the questions every time, but you should know them and be able to discriminate which ones are suitable for specific conversations.

- What separates your company from the competition? You have just offered this person a chance to tell you everything.
- How did you get your start in your business? What was the weirdest or most comical event you've experienced

in your business? Let them tell you their story.

- What do you enjoy most about your profession? This inquiry almost always gets a positive response.
- What advice would you give someone just starting in this field? What notable changes have you seen take place in your profession through the years? What ways have you found to be the most potent marketing tool when promoting your business? Here's the chance for the person to be a mentor, which most business people are flattered to be.
- What do you see as the coming trends in this field? Again, you're distinguishing them as an expert.
- How would you like people to describe how you do business? Here they'll tell you not what they do best, but how they do it.
- What would be the riskiest thing you'd do with your business if you knew you couldn't fail? Remember, they must not only know you, but also like and trust you as well.

The best question is "What can I do to know if somebody I'm talking to would be a good prospect for your business?" They'll appreciate the fact that you care enough to actually mention their business, even though you just recently met.

It really pays to learn more about networking. Everyone loves having your help building his or her business, and it will only help you build your business too!

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