

10 tips for amazing business networking

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Find out how you can network like a pro and make meaningful connections in your local small business community with our top tips.



Business networking is an effective business tool for your small business, providing a platform to meet like-minded individuals and build connections for growth and development, both professionally and individually.

With the rise in virtual networking, there are even more opportunities to meet local business owners at networking events, and many events are free to attend. If you're booked onto an upcoming [FSB event](#), here are ten ways you can make the most of the opportunity.

1. Have a strategy

Think about what you want to achieve:

- Raise your company profile
- Gain new contacts and learn new skills
- Generate referrals

If you are new to networking, visit as many events as possible, talk to the regulars and find out if the group will fit in with your strategy before making a regular commitment.

2. Pitch perfect

- Create a simple 60-second 'elevator pitch' which describes your business and your objectives clearly and concisely. You'll want to include your professional expertise and unique selling point.
- Be memorable. In a room full of others what makes your business stand out from the crowd?
- Bring props, marketing materials and business cards to show off your expertise and help others to understand what you do
- Quote testimonials from your satisfied customers and demonstrate how your product or service has helped others

3. Get out of your comfort zone

It's only natural to gravitate towards people that you already know, but networking is all about meeting people outside your circle. If you find yourself in this situation, scan the room for people you have yet to meet and facilitate the opportunity for them to join in the conversation.

Look out for new people and remember how you first felt when you turned up to somewhere new. A friendly introduction goes a long way.

4. Keep attending

Networking is a slow burn, and it takes a while to build up trust within a group. Attend regularly, help others and have an effective follow up. Networking is about building up your network and relationships. You might not immediately get business from an event, but one person you speak to might open several doors.

5. Listen

Take an interest in others and find out what they want to achieve from the meeting.

- See if their objectives or values match yours and find some common ground
- Can you help them through your own network contacts connections or make introductions that might be of interest either from a supplier need, a client perspective or strategic partnership?
- Ask open ended questions such as how, who, and why. This will help to open discussions and show your interest. You will be amazed at what you can learn from others

6. Follow up

It's not what happens at the event, it's what you do after that is most important. Be pro-active in follow ups.

Be proactive and use social media to connect with people you have met. [LinkedIn](#) is the most popular platform for this and can act as your virtual business card.

Having separate catch ups with key individuals outside of the networking sessions will help to avoid getting into any lengthy conversations during the event that may prevent you from meeting other people.

7. Make referrals or introductions

Where possible, always provide the person you are referring to with a way of getting in touch directly with your contact, whether it's your LinkedIn, email address or phone number.

If you were introduced or recommended by someone, keep the person who made the introduction up to date with the progress and outcome. If it was successful, a positive action would be to thank them publicly at the next meeting, as this not only demonstrates to others

that the network is working, but it can also help to build both your and the referrer's credibility within the group.

8. Measure

Are you achieving your objectives? How much business is generated through this activity either directly or by introductions or referrals? Compare your findings against the cost of investments and be sure to factor in your own cost per hour.

9. Networking etiquette

Never just push your business card or leaflets into people's hands. Networking should be about building relationships, trust and credibility. You may have a service or offering that might be relevant to the attendees, but a hard sell in this type of environment usually isn't effective and doesn't give out a good first impression. Networking is all about helping others.

10. Dress to impress

Looking and feeling good is vital for your networking confidence. This doesn't mean you have to wear a suit - just appropriate, clean attire for your line of business. A professionally produced name badge worn just below your right-hand shoulder will help others to approach you easily and avoid any awkwardness in having to recall your name, which will also help with introductions.

- Shake hands with people and make eye contact
- Smile and ensure your body language is open and friendly
- Be memorable for the right reasons