

Leadership: Afraid Of Networking? Tips To Make It Fun & Worthwhile.. The Why, Where, & How of Successful Networking !

I admit that I'm one of those people who always felt like running in the opposite direction whenever someone mentioned the word, **"networking."** *That was mainly because I wasn't sure where to network or how to even approach the concept of "networking"* (as an action verb).

What I found when I finally took action, was that there were an almost unlimited number of places to network. For example:

- **Association meetings:** Find and attend local business and professional meetings. You can also attend your city's chamber of commerce meetings and networking events.
- **Alumni events:** Seek out networking events through your college or university's alumni association.
- **Networking groups:** Join groups focused on encouraging networking, such as eWomenNetwork (if you're female) or Meetup, which helps groups of people with shared interests plan meetings and form offline clubs in their local communities.
- **LinkedIn:** You can join groups that are of interest and then look for local networking events.
- **Online research:** Use websites such as [Eventbrite](#), [NetParty](#) or [FindNetworkingEvents](#) to seek out networking events that match your interests.
- **Join a club/organization:** Many organizations offer the chance to meet new people as well as learn new skills while you network, such as [Toastmasters](#).
- **Other resources:** Your local library and churches also often provide listings of networking events.

My next challenge was to figure out how to network. My breakthrough came when I realized that I needed to have a clearly defined purpose or reason to network. For example, my purpose might be to network:

- To find someone **who worked at a company where I wanted to work.**
- To find **career mentors.**
- To find people willing to **tell me about their jobs** and **what it took to be successful**, because they were in jobs that I wanted in the near future.

Finally, I realized that I couldn't just show up at an event; I had to actively circulate through the attendees and proactively strike up conversations. I'm an introvert so this wasn't always easy for me, but it helped me improve my communication skills and gave me opportunities to meet some amazing people.

Here are a few of the other networking lessons I learned:

- **Yes, it's a social event,** but treat it as a business event. Act professionally and don't drink too much alcohol, if it's offered.
- **Prepare what you'll discuss.** Think about how to introduce yourself to others and how you'll explain the help you're seeking – be brief.
- **Move around the event and meet people.** Don't hide out in a corner talking with only a few people – push yourself.
- **Be a good listener** – don't just focus on your own agenda/purpose.
- Don't forget to bring **business cards.**
- **Smile!** It will help you look approachable and open to discussion.

– Lisa Quast, author of the recently released book, [Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want. Every Time.](#) Join me on Twitter @careerwomaninc

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