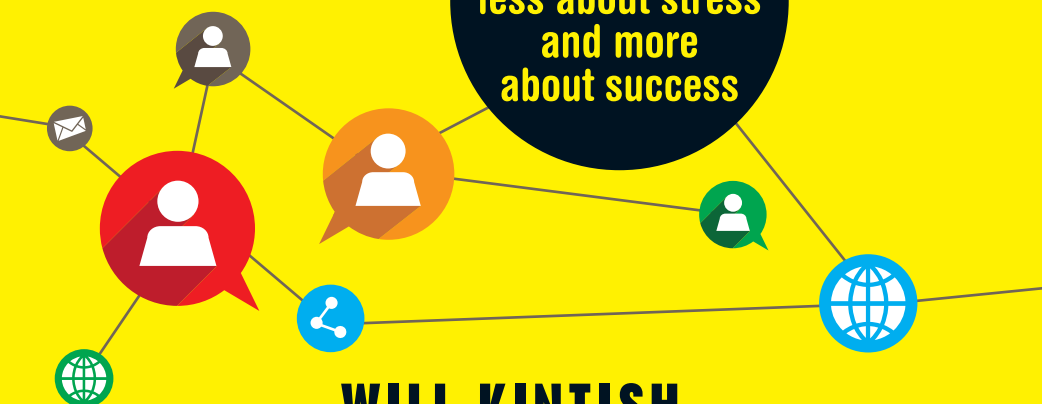




BUSINESS NETWORKING

THE SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to make
networking
less about stress
and more
about success



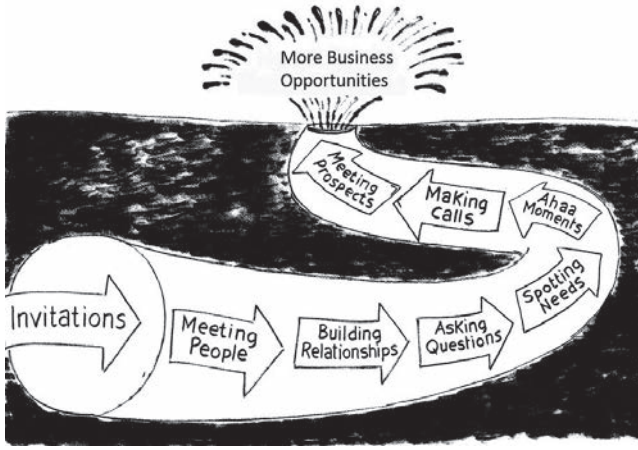
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Business Networking – The Survival Guide

DURING THE EVENT

B: *Hang on a moment! I don't feel great, but of the six different groups I think the person on their own would be easiest to approach.*

Meeting people is the second stage of the networking pipeline. You've accepted the invitation so now's the time to see who else has turned up to the event.



Step-by-step guide on how to move forward



You see that lady over there? It says Betty on her name badge.



She is waiting for you to talk to her. Here is what you should do:

- Walk over slowly. Remember she is nervous and knows no one – that's why she is alone.
- Stop about one metre away and smile ... don't forget the smile. Ask if you can join her. You may want to use the words, 'May I join you?' or any other opening phrase that you feel comfortable with.
- Shake hands firmly, maintaining good eye contact.
- *She will not say no.* In fact, she will give you a big mental hug. Don't expect a real one, it's too soon!
- Introduce yourself with your first name only. Even if you are wearing name badges, it is usual to introduce yourself by name. Make sure you listen, and I mean truly listen, so that you hear her name. Then use it once or twice in the conversation to cement it. If someone you know then comes over, it will be easy to introduce them with no embarrassment.
- Then ask the icebreaker (see page 50) and off you go.

It sounds simple, and it is. If you feel uncomfortable about approaching a stranger, here are some ground rules that might make it easier:

- **Approach the person you think you will feel most secure with.** If you find it easier to talk to women, then start with a woman. If you find it easier to talk to men, try a man first.
- **Look for people of your own age group.** Many young people I come across find it intimidating talking to their elders as they perceive they are less knowledgeable, by comparison. So stick to people your own age, at least at the start of an event. You're bound to have more in common and therefore will feel much more comfortable.
- **Keep it short (or tall).** As you can see, I am a little vertically challenged. So for me, going up to three people all over two metres tall makes me feel a little uncomfortable.



You don't always have a choice over who you end up talking to, but when you do, make it easy for yourself. Practise talking to strangers – even if they seem an easy choice to you. This will make you feel more at ease and you will be more prepared for others down the line.

“Practise talking to strangers – even if they seem an easy choice.”

Top tip

Think: Male or female? Young or old? Tall or not so tall?

When networking, it's important to ensure you feel the best you can. In other words, network with purpose. All the work you do with clients and business contacts is thought through using all your expertise and knowledge. The networking part of your job should be tackled in the same skilled and professional manner. Even experienced networkers, including myself, take a deep breath before walking into a room and usually start off with the easy option. I will start an event talking to people I know; it makes me feel secure and relaxed. Believe me, even when you have done it many times, you will still have slight feelings of self-doubt and hesitation. My role is to ensure that those feelings are minimal.

“Even experienced networkers take a deep breath before walking into a room.”

Remembering names

I'm sure everyone has at some point been introduced to someone and immediately forgotten their name. Names are critical for networking, so how do you ensure you remember them correctly?

The first thing you have to do is change your attitude to people's names. It's not a matter of your memory; you can retain all sorts of information. If I asked you to tell me five facts about, say, ten clients you are working with at this moment, you could, couldn't

you? Yet at a networking event when all you have to do is to retain one or, occasionally, two words (a name!), you struggle.

The reason you forget is because you're not listening in the first place. You are so busy trying to make a good first impression you miss the most important aspect of relationship building – their name. Your name is important to you and everyone else's name is equally as important to them.

“Remembering names is a mindset, not a memory issue.”

Remembering names is a mindset, not a memory issue. So stop thinking, ‘I’m rubbish with names’. Instead think, ‘I build better and quicker relationships when I work just a little harder at remembering people’s names. I am going to treat their name with the same respect I treat the owner of that name.’ So how can you remember names better?

- **Picture association.** Using pictures can help you remember. See Jane and Ken below? Ken’s got the right idea. He’s thinking about Tarzan’s Jane swinging in an apple tree.



- **Forget surnames.** You're only interested in the first name first, so concentrate your efforts on that.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Repeat the name as you are shaking hands and concentrate on that one word. Use the name a couple of times in the early moments of the conversation to cement it in your memory.
- **Don't be embarrassed.** If you don't hear their name because it's noisy, they speak far too quickly or they have a name that is not familiar to you, then simply say, 'I'm sorry, can you tell me your name again?' They will never say, 'I've told you once, I'm not going to tell you again!!' In fact, they will be pleased you're showing such an interest.

Dale Carnegie summed it up over 80 years ago in his famous book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*: 'A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.'

Top tip

So many people have limp handshakes. Ensure yours is firm but not too firm. Make sure the contact is good by fitting the semicircle between your forefinger and your thumb into theirs. And *always* make good eye contact when shaking hands.

So, back to Betty. After you have approached her, smile, ask if you can join her, shake hands properly, make eye contact and introduce yourself with your first name. She will almost certainly give her first name.

W: *This is your big moment, Brian. Focus and give your full attention to that one word. If she gives you her surname (which I happen to know is Focalpinto), ignore it.*