

Who should I talk to?

See who's flying solo - look for people standing alone – they're easier to approach. If nobody is standing alone then look for groups of three or more. Approach them, stand on the edge, make eye contact with someone (not the person speaking) and smile. Wait for an appropriate moment to introduce yourself, e.g. a break in the conversation. People will generally look at you and smile back, and either introduce themselves and their colleagues or invite you to introduce yourself.

What are the best types of questions to ask?

Open Ended Questions – Ask questions that make the conversation insightful and interesting and leave you feeling inspired and motivated to connect. “What's the biggest thing you're working on at the moment?” “What business problem does your company solve?” “What is a good example of how you are doing that?” “What's the most unique aspect of what you do?”

How should I approach someone?

Informal Introductions at First - Give your first name and offer your hand for a handshake. Icebreaking is fast – it's as quick as “hi, I'm Luke” and offering your hand. Then you can go into the conversation topics. At first you're just looking for common ground.

How long should I talk to people?

It depends on your agenda - if you're looking to speak to all the graphic designers in an event of 200 people, your conversations are going to be about five minutes each. You may find yourself talking to a potential client or someone you want to exchange business cards with, and these conversations are going to be a lot more in-depth. You may only talk to two people, but if they're good contacts, it'll be worth it.

How do I move on from a conversation tactfully?

You shouldn't lie in order to leave a conversation. For example, if you say you're going to head off and then you're seen chatting away to someone on the other side of the room, your credibility will be shot.

Be honest. Say something like, "I've really enjoyed meeting you. Are there any other people you're hoping to meet? Perhaps I've met someone I can introduce you to," or "I've really enjoyed meeting you, but I'm hoping to chat to some other people too. Do you have a business card? I can drop you an email sometime this week, which day is good for you?"

What should I say when meeting a person for the first time?

Less is better - Offer two to three small pieces of information, for example the name of your employer and what you do. As you get further into the conversation, volunteer other pieces of information such as which department you work in, what kind of role you perform and so on. If your contact looks a little clueless about what you do, make it easy for them by explaining as simply as possible what kind of work you handle. This can be done by using a recent example, saying what you're working on currently, or saying what a typical day entails

If I am shy or introverted, when is the best time to arrive at the networking event?

Come for "introvert hour" - The beginning of an event is the perfect time to arrive if you're shy or introverted. Because there are fewer people there at this time, it is easier to engage in a conversation without being interrupted, and it's when everyone is looking for someone to speak with as the room fills up. Making one great connection early in the night can be the springboard to build your confidence, as well as help leverage meeting other new people throughout the course of the event.

What can I do if I become overwhelmed at a networking event?

Take a timeout - A networking event can be overwhelming for anyone, even if you don't consider yourself shy or introverted. Allow yourself to go to the restroom to take a minute to yourself, or go check out the food table for a quick breather.

What is a realistic meeting goal for an average networking event?

Set a goal to meet 3-5 people - Rather than attempting to meet as many people as possible, consider making a goal of meeting 3-5 people during an event. This allows you to fully engage in each conversation without feeling anxious that you need to meet someone new, and it gives you an opportunity to leave, should you so choose, once you've hit your goal. Focusing more on how you're progressing towards your goal may also take your mind off of any anxiety you have about being there.