

4 Tips for Making the Most of Networking

1. Be intentional. Networking should always be done with an intention, and not just to collect business cards and be seen. Approach networking as you approach your work: Set a goal for yourself and find a networking opportunity that meets that goal. In the situation I've mentioned, it was as simple as, "I want to learn more about corporate boards."

2. Have an icebreaker. It can be tough to walk up to a stranger and start conversation, no matter how confident you are. But having a line ready to go in order to generate conversation is crucial. I have found much success with a simple, "What brings you here to this event?" It works every time—it goes straight to the point and builds on your first common interest: that fact that you're both there for a reason!

3. Be open about your career goals. Had I not felt comfortable in speaking about my intention in attending the corporate networking event, it's likely I never would have built upon my network of women leaders. Oftentimes, we don't want to come off as pushy or disingenuous, so we tiptoe around our goals in networking. But I encourage you to speak up about your goals.

4. Follow up. If you have a great conversation with someone at a networking event and exchange contact information, send him or her a note and remark on your interaction. Mention something specific you enjoyed about speaking with the person. If you offered to connect him or her with someone else, follow through. Networking isn't over when you walk out of the event!

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