

Dispelling the Top Five Myths About Attending Networking Events

By [Jason Jacobsohn](#) ★

Networking can be a challenge for some people because they either don't understand it or they don't feel the need to participate. People have their own perceptions about the value of networking and when they should network.

For some people, networking is only important when a need arises (such as a new job or a product to sell). People with this attitude fail to realize that networking is a process over time. If done effectively, their needs will be met with less effort and greater satisfaction.

Below are some common myths that people have about networking. Once you learn to brush off these myths, you will gain a new appreciation and respect for networking.

1) Networking Should Only Happen When Job Searching

Perhaps the most misunderstood perception of networking is that you should only network when you need a job. While it is true that networking can help you to find a job, the actual landing of a new job is more the result of effective and continuous networking.

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Networking is about building relationships with people, which takes some time and effort. Therefore, integrate networking into your routine whether you have a job or not.

Find ways to build your relationships with people such as helping them with their needs, connecting them with people or providing them with resources. Over time, you will have built solid and trusted relationships.

When the time comes that you need a new job, you can contact your network to help you. Chances are they will be more than happy to help you, which can actually speed up the job process for you. Because many jobs are found through networking, be sure to take advantage of this method.

2) Events Are About People Trying to Sell You Something

It is true that you will meet people at networking events who are trying to sell you a product or service. However, don't let these people turn you away from events. Various types of people attend networking events and this is just one type of individual you will meet.

People who only try to sell to others at events are really missing the point of networking. Only after relationships are built should someone try to sell a product or service.

Other than salespeople, you will also meet individuals who are looking for jobs, business partnerships, new employees and investors. You will even meet people who want to help others so they can build quality relationships and gain some new experiences.

Keep in mind that people have a variety of reasons for attending events. Don't let salespeople deter you if you're not comfortable talking with them. Move on and talk to someone else.

3) Networking Events Are All the Same

It may appear that all networking events are the same because the basic premise is that people gather in a room to talk to one other. In fact, these people may have the same goals each time they attend an event.

However, many events exist (such as professional development, structured networking, social and charitable). In addition, events exist that focus on industries, demographics and like-minded individuals.

Because each event has a different mission or agenda, you have a chance to meet all kinds of people. In addition to being able to meet people, you will also have the opportunity to learn from the programs at some of these events.

Keep an open mind. You can take away a different idea or new contact from each event that you attend. Try a variety of events to find the ones you like the best.

4) Networking is Only For Outgoing People

It is a common misconception that you must have a certain personality to network with others. While talking with others may be easier for outgoing individuals, you don't need this personality trait to effectively network.

While networking, you will meet both introverted and extroverted people. All it takes is a good conversation and the willingness to participate to start building relationships.

If you aren't comfortable starting a conversation, you can wait until someone approaches you or you can attend a structured networking event where you will be given the chance to talk to people with ease.

People who attend events want to talk with others. Don't feel shy about approaching them. While you may be taken out of your comfort zone at an event, it never hurts to brush up on your people skills.

5) Networking Takes Too Much Time

With anything in life, you get out what you put in. The same is true for networking. You can spend as little or as much time as you want with it and still see positive results.

Have a networking goal in mind and strategically focus your time and effort so you can reach your objective. Decide on the types of people you want to meet and then research to find the right events.

Some people attend a couple of events a week while others only attend a couple events a month. Figure out what works best for you and integrate networking into your business routine.

No matter how much you network, you still need to build quality relationships with the people you meet. Though this will take some time, it's well worth the effort.

Final Thought

Once you dispel these common myths about networking, you will feel more comfortable about the process and begin to understand the importance of integrating networking into your life. Networking should not be seen as a burden.

Rather, networking is an opportunity to improve your relationships, which can ultimately help you in life professionally and personally.

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