

Five things not to do when networking

Networking is a necessary evil that many people avoid at all costs, for a number of reasons. Maybe they hate the inauthenticity of small talk or they feel overwhelmed by their expectations. Whatever the case, networking can be incredibly challenging, even for the most seasoned lawyer. Here are some tips about what you shouldn't do when trying to cultivate valuable connections.

1. Don't try to network with every person in sight. The key to successful networking is cultivating mutually beneficial relationships and this is not going to happen with every person in the room. Instead, make strategic choices about who you want to speak with and what you want to speak about.
2. Don't interrupt. When you are conversing with someone, show the common courtesy of not interrupting. Not only does it demonstrate your genuine interest in making a mutual connection, but it may also set you apart from others in the room. With good listening skills, may even secure some valuable work from that new business in town.
3. Stop giving your card to everyone. Some people see networking as the Olympics of business card exchanges. They swoop in and make sure every person in the room has their card. But what good is that little piece of cardstock if you put no effort into making a face-to-face connection? Before handing out your business cards, engage in conversations and determine which individuals are best suited for further communications.
4. Don't act like the speaker is the only person in the room. If your chosen networking event has a featured speaker, don't stalk the speaker and ignore every other person in the room. The event is probably filled with knowledgeable contacts and potential clients. Work the room and meet a variety of people. Then, if you don't get to the speaker or you find the speaker to be less than informative, you can still benefit from the event.

5. Don't let intimidation overwhelm you. The thought of networking tends to intimidate some people, but don't let your anxieties and fears get the best of you. Just take a deep breath, and take advantage of the opportunities in front of you. There is nothing worse than leaving a networking event having done zero networking.

Networking is a valuable tool for building your legal practice. It may not be your favorite activity, but hopefully, these tips will help make your networking efforts a little less annoying and a little more beneficial.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, The Legal Writing Studio, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.