

Do you shy away from networking? 3 tips to inspire confidence

If you examine the behaviours of the world's most successful people, they network everywhere they go, from business conferences to the gym, and with the person sitting next to them on the plane. But for the majority of us, the easiest form of networking is online. The thought of attending networking events in the real world can have even the most confident person retreating in self-doubt.

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However, if you want to get ahead, you need to get out there. Career coach Kerina Alter believes that you can build your networking confidence if you approach it as a form of socialising not selling. “Networking is about creating and building quality relationships so that you can enlist support and comparably ask for ideas, advice and referrals.”

If that's not enough to convince you of the benefits, we've got three quick tips to help boost your confidence and get you networking in no time.

1. **Break the ice.** At a conference, make your introduction while taking your seat or at the buffet – it's less formal and gives you the opportunity to talk about the agenda for the day, speakers you are looking forward to hearing from or even the food on offer. Kerina says that networking confidence can be built in stages: “Start with people you know, then move to people who have been introduced to you by people you know, and then approach people you don't know at all.”
2. **Keep the conversation flowing.** Ask for some advice related to the event – it's also a useful way to get helpful information. Ask the person next to you whether they know anything about the speaker or what brings them to the event. Once you've started chatting, build rapport by asking for unrelated tips

on common interests like a restaurant or movie suggestion. People often find it very flattering to be asked their opinion on something.

3. **Come away with meaningful contacts.** Attending networking events are great for practicing your social skills but if you really want them to benefit you, you need to act afterwards too. Career management and business specialist from Hudson Recruitment Marina Pitisano says, “Networking is not about what happens in the room but what you do after so follow up, follow up, follow up! This is where you convert your contacts into opportunities!”

Following these three easy tips should have you on your way to networking like a pro. Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone – there are so many interesting, inspiring and entrepreneurial people to meet who are keen to learn about the expertise and experience YOU can offer them too.