

Background

Making contacts and networking

Three steps to successful networking

In the business world it's often useful to increase our network of contacts. Networking is useful when you want a new job or a promotion, but it's also a good way to make contacts for your everyday working life. Networking can also help friends and colleagues. You can give information to them and put them in contact with others. There are three stages to successful networking.

Be prepared

Firstly, always carry your business cards – even at the weekend. As well as looking smart before a meeting, use a nice-looking pen to write someone's name, number, and email. It's part of the first impression. Before you visit a new company, prepare your self-introduction. If English isn't your native language, you probably still make mistakes, but presenting yourself is something you can say without errors and with confidence. Begin with something simple like, 'Hello, my name's Bernard Olsen and I work for Wintershall. I'm an engineer and we provide ...'. The other language to practise before a meeting is conversation starters like the news and sport (but not politics). Finally, before you meet someone, have a plan and know what you want from the meeting.

Make the contact

People often help themselves in networking situations. But you should also help others in social situations. Introduce yourself to someone standing on their own. Just because someone

isn't an outgoing person, they can still be a good contact. You can start the conversation with some questions: 'Is this seat free?', 'Who do you work for?', 'What do you specialize in?' etc. When the other person answers, show you are interested. Generally, don't talk for a long time. Try to finish the conversation with something specific. A sentence such as 'Let's meet again some time' isn't very successful. 'See you next Tuesday at ten' is a successful ending. Another good way to end a conversation is to introduce the person to someone else you know. Say, 'Can I introduce you to ...?' and give some information about the other person.

Keep in contact

After networking, it's important to manage the information. Spend some time making notes about the people you met and why you might contact them in the future. You can write these notes on the back of their business card or type notes into your computer's contact list. Email or call contacts from time to time. If you don't have a specific reason to contact them today, pass on information or the name of someone they might be interested in working with. This reminds them about you and they will send contacts back to you.

And finally, one last thing to remember is that successful networkers don't wait for a conference or special event. They can make useful contacts at their child's school play or a local football match. See every meeting as an opportunity.

Exercises

- 1** This article is about 'networking'. This means meeting and talking to people in your working life. Read paragraph 1 of the text. What reasons does the writer give for networking?
- 2** Discuss as a class.
 - 1 Is networking important for your job? Why / Why not?
 - 2 How often do you go to events, e.g. conferences, and network?
- 3** Read the rest of the article. Which statements does the writer agree with?
 - 1 Your appearance is always important for networking.
 - 2 Prepare your words before a first meeting.
 - 3 Only network with friendly, social people.
 - 4 Introduce people to each other.
 - 5 You don't need to keep information about everyone – just people who are customers.
 - 6 Only contact someone again when you need something from them.
 - 7 Networking is for work, not when you are relaxing.
- 4** The writer suggests expressions for networking. Underline the expressions in the article which ...
 - 1 introduce you.
 - 2 start the conversation.
 - 3 end the conversation.
 - 4 introduce someone else.
- 5** Work with a partner. Think of one more expression for 1–4 in exercise 4.
- 6** Look at the different forms of the word 'networking' in the table. Build the other words from the text in the same way.

verb	activity	person
<i>network</i>	<i>networking</i>	<i>networker</i>
<i>present</i>		
<i>make conversation</i>		-----
<i>manage</i>		

- 7** Work with a partner.
 - 1 Make sentences with the different forms of the words in the table.
 - 2 Can you build words from other words you know? For example: from the words in your job title or the name of your department? *I work in research and development. I'm a researcher and I have to develop new ideas.*
- 8** Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.
- 9** Discuss as a class. Read this famous expression in English. *'It isn't about WHAT you know, it's about WHO you know.'*
 - 1 Do you have a similar expression in your language? Can you translate the expression?
 - 2 How important is WHO you know in your country or culture? Is it more important than WHAT you know?
 - 3 Has someone you know ever helped you to get a job or a promotion? What happened?