

How to Network to Grow Your Business



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Mastering the art of networking is one thing – but using it to grow your business is a whole other level.

So many books and articles have been written on how to network effectively, and if you want it, you can access a lifetime's worth of advice on how to connect with others. But although connecting with people is certainly a nice thing to do, at some point it can feel futile. There are only so many names you can collect; only so many events to attend.

If you really want to take your networking to the next level, you'll need to approach it in a way that ultimately leads to business growth. To do that, the best thing you can do is show people who you are. Give them the experience of you.

This goes beyond your elevator pitch. Ideally, you do have an elevator pitch and have crafted it to represent who you really are. But that's just the first step. After all, in your elevator pitch you're simply telling people who you are. In next-level networking, you also *show* them.

If you're an executive coach, for example, instead of chitchatting with new connections, look for opportunities to ask genuinely helpful coaching questions.

If you're a resource who provides a valuable service, pose thought provoking, reflective questions or point people to something that might be helpful for them to read, related to something that's important to them.

To get away from the superficial connection and into a real conversation, move from telling people what you do, and just do that for them. Forget about trying to get business from them; rather, just be you and show them how you can help.

All of this helps you connect with people in a more impactful way – one that helps you express what you care about and make the impact you're striving to achieve.

If you want to set yourself apart in your networking, I advocate for going in with a thoughtful, reflective plan. Organize what you're thinking before you go into any networking situation:

- Ask these universal questions, in order: Who, why, what, how and what if?
- Ask yourself who you would really like to connect with. Follow up that question with why you want to know them, and what you want to ask them to make a connection.
- Determine how you want to open the conversation. Choose one really good question that you're comfortable delivering and is also meaningful to you and the people you meet. For example, "Tell me about your practice and how you got to be as successful as you are?"
- Finally, imagine what kinds of interesting things might happen if all goes well. What if you find a meaningful connection with exactly the right type of person? What is the ideal outcome for you, and for them? Thinking about this ahead of time will focus your efforts.

If you know what you're going to ask, it takes down the exhaustion factor immediately, and you'll ultimately come off as much more genuine. More importantly, you'll learn to embrace your story, and learn about others' stories, in a more powerful way.

Shy? Get more of Joelle's networking strategies from her recent article in [The Oprah Magazine](#).

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