

# 10½ steps that will help you improve your follow up

Networking success isn't a given because you turned up to an event, it comes when you follow up with the people you meet at those events. A meeting turns into a coffee and a chat, that chat leads to another chat and over time, as long as there's common ground, opportunities to work together or refer to each other should arise.

However, one of the questions we are asked pretty much daily is how do you 'do' follow up? To answer that perennial question here are 10½ (easy) steps you can take to improve your follow up.

## 1 Re-set your mind-set

As we said in the intro, successful networking isn't about turning up, it's about following up. You're not just going to meet someone and get a job there and then, you'll need to work at it and that's where follow up come in.

It's not over-egging it to say that if you don't buy into that and/or if you're not prepared to invest in following up properly, it's not going to be worth networking.

## 2 Listen

Whilst you're speaking to someone, don't fall in the trap of talking endlessly about you ... and certainly don't rely on the anodyne and outmoded 'elevator script'.

You need to have a conversation and conversations needs to be 2-way. Really listen to what you're being told and listen out for that one little detail you can help with. That one detail will be the easiest follow up step to use and you won't hear it if you're just talking about you.

Too many people think networking is all about them. Meet - pitch -business card - move on.

## 3 Help! They'll need somebody ...

It isn't; real networking is about having a chat, getting on with people and leaving a positive impression. It's also about marking yourself out as the person they'd actually like to continue a conversation with.

One of the easiest ways to mark yourself out (and, to pick a life coach-ism, to 'build trust') is to offer help.

It may be they want to meet someone you know; it may be they need a bit more information on something; it may be that they like Mediterranean red wine; it may be that they need a ticket for the Champions League.

If you think you can help, offer that help which takes us on to ...

#### 4 Lay the follow up foundations

... make sure you say (in passing and as inconsequentially as possible) you may be able to help and what you're going to do next to deliver that help. Now you have your foot firmly in the door to come back to your new contact and keep your conversation moving forward.

#### 5 "When I get back to the office ..."

This is a simple mechanism we use so we know we have laid the follow up foundation. If we've used this phrase we know we have something to do and that the persona has agreed to accept that follow up. Here are some examples:

"When I get back to the office I'll send over the link to that article."

"When I get back to the office I'll introduce you to them by email."

"When I get back to the office I'll dig out that book and drop it off for you the next time I'm passing."

#### 6 Do what you say you're going to do

Now you've offered something and confirmed you're going to do it to leave your foot in the door, you need to do it.

Nothing will shatter your credibility quicker than saying you'll do something then fail to deliver. After all the ultimate aim of networking is to try and win work or win referrals and who's going to trust you with something as important as that if you can't do something as simple as forward an article or the details of that holiday resort your friend stayed at?

#### 7 Personal interest often trumps professional interest

When you're chatting it's likely you'll stray off your professional remit and talk about something a little more personal – your family, your holidays, sports, travel, food & drink etc. This is not something to be ashamed of. In fact, quite the reverse!

You are trying to establish a personal connection so it may be that going down the personal route will yield better results and an easier follow up position than sticking rigidly to the professional stuff.

## 8. LinkedIn

LinkedIn gives you a very easy first follow up step. In your invitation try and make sure you include a personal detail in your invitation (“we met at x event”) and try to lay a follow up foundation (“I’ll be in touch to see if we can arrange a coffee as I’d like to continue our conversation”).

## 9. Get that coffee

At the event you may have had a few minutes which is long enough to decide if it is worth following up (they could be a potential client or referrer, you established there’s common ground, you actually enjoyed talking to them) but you won’t start uncovering any sort of mutually beneficial opportunities until you have a chance to talk in more detail.

Coffee is probably the most practical setting to do that in given it’s socially acceptable, low risk (you can close it off quickly if it’s not working) and more time and cost efficient than lunch.

## 10. Persevere

You may not get an immediate response. Never take no response as no interest – they may be having a bad or busy day, their children may have been struck down with whatever illnesses children get struck down by, their boiler may have packed in or you may have just slipped down their inbox.

Be prepared to take a leaf from Robert Bruce and if at first you don’t succeed, try and try again.

## 10½. Just do it!

Nothing happens without effort. A wiser man than me once told me that if you want to lose weight you need to eat less and exercise more but that advice won’t generate results on its own; to generate results you need to take the advice and eat less and exercise more.

We know from experience that all of the preceding advice works and works well but for it to work, you need to do it!

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