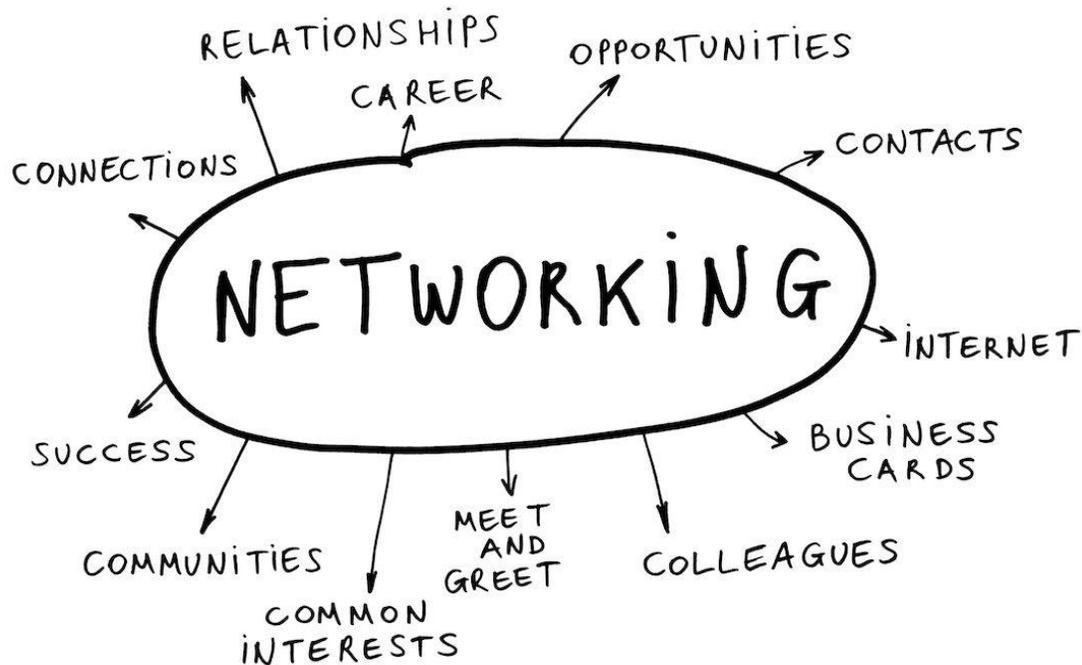


Network to new Career Opportunities with the Ultimate Networkers Checklist



Your Network is the key to building Net-Worth as a professional because it is essential to achieving long term career success. Hyperion author Dan Simmons voices this as, *“Our survival may depend upon our talking to one another.”* Business connections are the life of your future career yet most professionals have no strategy to reach out to others in a meaningful way.

One of the fastest ways to accomplish that goal is by attending industry trade shows or educational conferences. Industry events immediately place you around like minded professionals to develop relationships and new friendships.

These relationships happen quickly because all attendees share similar values, education and interests in a learning environment because it is so valuable to them. Learn to treat these events and the hundreds or thousands of attendees as valuable opportunities to develop relationships. Network wisely and your career will soar, ignore these professional events and risk staying stuck or sliding backward in your career.

Career expert Timothy M. Houston describes the networking process as, *“When you are networking you are doing more than just marketing your business; you are*

marketing yourself. Networking is not a part-time or occasional exercise. Everywhere we go, we have an opportunity to network with others."

Events create fantastic opportunity for those who know how to network, while those opportunities are lost on the majority of attendees because they have no plan to use while attending the event. Business coach Joe Sweeney said it this way, 'Networking is a contact sport,' describes it this way. *"When you attend networking events, act as if it is your party and you are the host or hostess. By doing this, you will help others be at ease and demonstrate a heart of service and generosity."* Having a plan will bring big results since the average person leaves an event with some information, while you will be leaving with names and contact numbers to open up new career doors.

This ultimate list of conference networking strategies for students, young professionals or midlife professionals seeking a career change will challenge you to be intentional with time and energy in preparation for your next training event.

Most professionals were never specifically trained in networking so this guide will start your journey. As your career moves forward be kind in sharing the strategies you know work for you with others in your network to add greater value to their career journey.

*"Forget "six degrees of separation" today it's "six degrees of CONNECTION."
Morag Barrett*

Ultimate Professional Networking Checklist



Long before the Conference –

- Have clear objectives in place before you attend any training event because there are thousands of annual options and you only have time for a few
- Do you know your core values well enough to articulate those beliefs?
- Research events that match your interests career goals
- Look for training events that offer key industry connections
- Search trade association events that add considerable value to attendees

- ___ Find out who will be attending by utilizing social media #Hashtags and then connecting to likeminded professionals ahead of time
- ___ Contact people of interest long before the event, if an attendee or speakers list is posted to schedule a brief meeting or coffee
- ___ Do you have enough confidence to meet new people in new places?
- ___ Design professional business cards with easy to read contact information
- ___ Are you clear about your ability and the value you can add to others?
- ___ Have you measured your career goals against this event to maximize your time at the conference?
- ___ Are you sure this event is the best investment of time/money? If not reconsider your motives in attending
- ___ Is your LinkedIn profile a good reflection of your skills as a professional?
- ___ If asked, could you share an emerging trend in your industry?

“A huge number of jobs that are filled are never advertised to the public, or if they are, they’re filled by people who have a connection to the employer.”- Melanie Pinola

A Week Before the Conference -

- ___ What is your primary goal in attending this particular event? Can you state this in a single sentence for clarity and focus?
- ___ Study the posted conference list of speakers/topics and breakout sessions
- ___ Which speakers are “*must see*” to deepen learning in an area you need most?
- ___ Which topics are most interesting or useful to me as a professional?
- ___ Map out the events each day of the conference to insure you have enough time for brief personal health breaks to stay refreshed between speakers
- ___ Study the event schedule to make sure you are in the right place at the right time. Schedules are available weeks ahead of events for your planning – use it
- ___ Who do you already know to meet for coffee during the event to catch up?
- ___ Scheduling time with people you may already know are attending will deepen those relationships while keeping you in a mindset of active connection
- ___ Who do you need to know to move forward in my career?
- ___ Prioritize the people, or type of people you would like to meet and be intentional with your time. Some connections are a minute, others longer. The more focused you

are on what you hope to accomplish, the greater likelihood you will walk away with significant growth, instead of just spending time at a conference center

___ Be intentional during breaks to meet other likeminded professionals

___ Who are the most networked and influential people in your industry? (*Leaders with the most contacts*). Make a list of those influencers and consider the best way to connect with them

___ Make quality introductions of the people you already know with new attendees at the event or even better, give them a referral to add greater value

___ Have a clear idea of what a “*successful*” conference would look like to you

___ Is your CV, Resume or LinkedIn up to date? LinkedIn Photo current?

___ Consider using a V-Card instead of paper business card if working in or around high-tech organizations to show you are current with emerging technology

___ Rest up prior to the event, and pace yourself throughout the conference

___ Map out the address based on posted conference location. This prevents being late from going to the wrong facility or not being able to find parking.

___ Prepare your materials the night before in a folder, briefcase, purse or laptop bag to keep your materials organized, (*business cards, resumes, notepads and material you may pick up from other attendees or vendors. Note: backpacks are starting to be banned at many venues for security, check ahead of time*)

___ Post on social media you are excited about attending the conference by using the hashtag of the event. (*Example- only 4 more days until #SXSW – it’s going to be great! Will I see you there?*)

“Whether networking comes naturally for you or is some seriously scary stuff, it is important to be intentional about every networking opportunity you decide to pursue.”- Amber Hurdle

Pre-Event Exercise - Who do you want to meet?

Name: _____

Company: _____

Shared Interests: _____

Common Connections: _____

Questions or Advice to Ask to Start a Conversation? _____

“Being authentic will get you where you need and want to go, and it will be your path to building meaningful connections with others. You have to project the best parts of your true self. In other words, before you expect others to like you, you have to like you- that is the law of self-image.”- Michelle Tillis Lederman

During the conference consider –

___ Push outside your comfort zone – you never know who you might meet that may open up the door to places you could never get to yourself.

___ Your networking goal is to build relationships, not appear like an aggressive spammer. Ask questions. Be friendly. Stay curious

___ Model your professionalism by being polite and personable

___ Listen twice as much as you talk. Be engaged by acknowledging and responding to the conversation started by your new contacts

___ Introduce yourself to others in a professional and concise manner

___ Use the re-introduce strategy to help people recall your name, while you are intentionally repeating their name to learn it faster

___ Quickly learn names and memorable information about fellow attendees to remember their names and career focus. Make them your focus since everyone likes to talk about themselves if they believe you are interested

___ Eye contact is a genuine sign of attention and respect, so listen with your eyes

___ A firm handshake is still an appropriate greeting between new contacts in a business setting. Practice that yours is professional without being bone-crushing or ‘limp fish’. It is inappropriate to hug people you do not know

___ Dress professionally. Better to be a little overdressed than too casual or sloppy, (*especially for new job seekers*). Bring your ‘best’ self and be genuine

___ Wear comfortable shoes. These events are for walking/connecting– not sitting

___ Prepare an “*elevator speech*” with :30 seconds (*time it takes an elevator to go one floor*) of data about my work in a concise interesting way

___ Have your business cards easily accessible and have a system to manage personal information on the cards you receive, (*write information on the back of a business card, or use a post it, or digital note to manage specific information for more personal follow up*)

___ Share your business cards wisely and strategically, never in a pushy manner

___ If sharing a new product or service you created, have your brochures easily accessible from a folder that protects them from being crumpled

___ Set a simple goal of how many new people you would



like to meet, instead of trying to connect to hundreds. Be intentional

___ Turn your cell phone off or to airplane mode to prevent distractions

___ Use a battery backup so you don't have to be distracted by a power loss, or worse searching the conference center for an electric plug. You didn't come to the conference to recharge your phone – you came to meet people

___ Utilize digital cards, CV or digital resumes for rapid follow up of career opportunities while at the conference, *(however, only share when asked)*

___ Make referrals and connections between the people you may already know at the conference. Adding value to others always makes you more valuable.

___ Which exhibitors offer the type of products or services most helpful to your current and future work? Spend your time with those vendors to prevent distractions about products or services you don't need

___ Eat healthy before, during and after the event to stay mentally focused and drink more water than caffeinated beverages

___ Breath Mints will help more than you know

___ Sit up front to connect with the speakers and people most interested in the topic. Arrive early to select the best spot. Arrive late and the session may be so crowded you miss out on the networking opportunities from those seated around you who came to learn and grow

___ Legal pads for notes is more professional than continual swiping of a phone or clacking of a keyboard. If you are going to use a laptop, be respectful to not create noise that might disturb others. Those seated around you might one day become a trusted relationship so start it well

___ Consider building a prepared script of key questions to ask in moving new conversations along. Stay curious and engaged with good questions

___ Are you prepared to take notes of what you learned? Who could you appropriately share your notes with to add greater value to them?

“Leaders empower individuals by building trust and coaching competence in their job roles and networking skills.” - Ken Blanchard

How to meet new Friends at a conference?

Be intentional on meeting those sitting alone at breaks. Start the conversation.

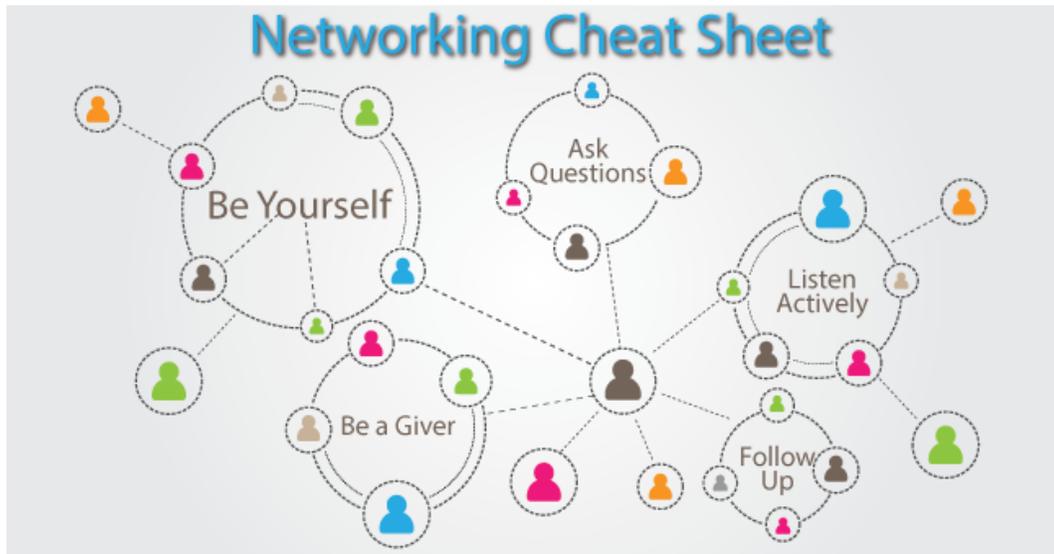
Learn their name. *(The single most important conference strategy)*

Ask why they are attending and really listen to their story

Get their contact info and snap a photo to add to the contact for memory retention.

Follow up!

“It is through the strength of what is genuine that meaningful connections build into relationships. 'Networking' is simply another way to think about how to start a relationship. Our relationships are our network.” - Michelle Tillis Lederman



First week Post-Event-

___ Express appreciation to event planners, organizers, speakers and support staff before you leave the event. Gratitude goes a long way for event staff who usually receive far more complaints than compliments. Being remembered as a kind person who shares praise will set you apart from other attendees

___ Connect on LinkedIn.com with everyone who gave you a business card

___ Connect on social media with the speakers, vendors and attendees who impressed you. People who are growing are the ones who shape an industry and staying connected with them will speed your growth path as well

___ Written thank you notes are the most personal way to express gratitude for those who personally helped you. Write a short note, include your business card and mail to your contact within the first week after the event

___ Use personalized note cards with your name or website pre-printed on it to save a step in quickly replying back to contacts

___ Reach out with a short note or email to those you felt especially connected to as a way to keep the conversation going. *(Keeping in touch with a new contact is essential to build a new relationship)*

___ A sincere email can be a rapid way to stay connected with contacts who didn't provide an actual mailing address, and is a rapid form of follow up

___ Send follow up emails promptly to model professionalism and keep your comments concise. This is a follow up step, not a lengthy conversation

___ Consider sending specific industry information, blog posts or articles that may deepen the impression you made with a new contact. Adding value to others brings value back to you

___ Before you schedule a meeting with a follow up contact consider your purpose to protect their time. Be intentional

___ Return any phone calls or emails from attendees in a clear and brief fashion

___ Have a written list of key points to cover for telephone conversations

___ Can you volunteer or serve on event committees next year to deepen your connection with the organization, speakers and leaders?

___ Ask your new contacts how to add greater value to their work; take notes

___ Monitor the room to evaluate if you are reaching the right person, or should reach out to someone else

___ What is my ultimate goal in following up with this contact? (*general information, schedule an interview, gain a job lead, connect to another professional...*)



___ If scheduling a meeting, be clear on why you are asking for the meeting

___ Stay in touch with contacts periodically throughout the year between events to deepen the relationship, not just contact when you need something

___ Decide to develop long-term meaningful relationships with contacts or potential mentors by being intentional in actions that help them. (*This is the golden rule of networking. Help others before trying to help yourself*).

___ Networking is a continual process, not a onetime event. Keep the conversation going and watch how your influence grows

“If you’ve just had a brief conversation at an event, ask, “Is it all right if I drop you a note?” You can follow up with a question in writing. Also, periodically send your potential mentor or sponsor information that she will find insightful. Once you’ve identified people who can be both mentors and sponsors, you need to make contact. Don’t hesitate to introduce yourself to a potential ally at an event or in the elevator and say you admire her work. If the person is spearheading a committee or drive, volunteer to be on it. You can also request an informational interview. You could

say something such as “I’ve heard so much about your work and would love to know more about it.” - Kate White, in “I Shouldn’t Be Telling You This”

Post-Event Exercise - Who do you need to follow up with first?

Name: _____

Company: _____

Shared Interests: _____

Common Connections: _____

Questions or Advice to Ask: _____

“Becoming well known (at least among your prospects & connections) is the most valuable element in the connection process.” - Jeffrey Gitomer

Job Change Strategy to use at Conferences and Events

___ Clearly define your objective. Why do you want to change jobs? Be clear and concise in your objectives to stay focused at events

___ Be mentally ready to make a change so you present as confident, not needy to those you may be meeting that could open up a new career door for you

___ Reach out to the people you already know will be attending the conference to start a conversation about your desire to make a job change

___ Tell friends, family and past coworkers of your desire to make a job change

___ Never share anything negative about your current employer at a conference

___ Stay positive and upbeat about wanting to grow in your career without attacking or putting down your employer, (*who may have paid for you to attend the event*).

___ Be professional at all times and Smile!



___ Check job posting boards to focus your attention and narrow your time and outreach to the people from companies you would like most to join

___ Many conferences have job posting boards on site, be sure to check those for prospective opportunities which may have just opened up

___ Have your resume updated and ready, (*both paper versions and digital*), but only share them when asked. Aggressively passing around your resume is not an effective strategy

___ Update your social media prior to the event then stay off social media during the event to focus on real relationships. Chatting with virtual contacts during the event is not as powerful as starting real conversations in real time

___ Asking others for opinions or advice is an appropriate conversation starter; asking people you do not know for a job is awkward and unprofessional

___ Many conferences have speed networking events. Sign up to attend since this may be an easier way to meet people because everyone at the event will be intentional about connecting.

___ Bring plenty of business cards to share with others when asked. Remember, other attendees business cards may be small or graphically printed on slick paper you cannot write on, so bring another way to capture key information about your new contact right after you meet them. The old saying holds true, "*The weakest ink is better than the strongest memory.*"

___ Have you checked LinkedIn or Twitter to see which contacts are most useful in your job search, and requested a brief meeting during the conference? A short direct message could open doors to a meaningful conversation

___ Make sure your online '*head-shot*' is professional and use the same image across all of your public social media sites

___ Pay attention to dress professionally, with shoes shined and minimal clutter in the material you are carrying around. Many vendors will give you SWAG, (*Stuff We All Get*) bags full of interesting marketing material. Unless you are in the advertising business these are distractions from your real goal at the conference – discussing new career options

___ Have samples of your blogs, podcasts or creative work easy to find on social media. Demonstrate your expertise and creativity with an online portfolio on Instagram or Pinterest to be taken more seriously in conversation. A picture of your work is worth a thousand words

___ Join career groups on social media like [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) or [BrazenCareerist.com](https://www.brazencareerist.com) to stay connected with thought leaders, as well as have a simple way to start conversations by sharing your thoughts and opinions on topic

___ Asking others for their professional career advice is appropriate and effective; asking people you do not know for a job is not a professional way to start

___ Are there speakers, trainers or board members who are respected in your industry attending the event who might become a mentor to you? Ask them

“It’s the people we hardly know, and not our closest friends, who will improve our lives most dramatically” - Meg Jay, ‘The Defining Decade’

Business Card Basics

Your business card should have your name, a professional email address, phone number and use a work address or PO Box.

Never put your home address on a card to share with people you would not want showing up unannounced at your home. Keep the design simple and clutter free.

The focus of the card is information to stay in touch and deepen the conversation.



Some people find adding a LinkedIn address, Twitter handle or a QR, (*Quick Response*) Code on a card makes it easier for potential contacts to go directly online to view your creativity in blogs, website, portfolio or online resume.

Even if you don’t currently have a job, print simple cards with contact information and your area of expertise to use at events until you are employed. Using economical printers like VistaPrint.com makes this a cost effective way to appear professional at every stage of your career, even between jobs. Never write your name on a napkin and expect a great job, this isn’t a movie script – it’s your life. Stay focused.

“When you know people, and those people know what you do, success knows how to find you.” – Kelly Hoey

Connection Strategies for Shy People - from Business Coach Susan C. Young

- *Be the one who takes the initiative and makes and effort to “work the room”*



- *Stretch beyond your comfort zone to speak with, sit with, and start conversations with people you do not know*
- *Spot the people who may be first timers or guests and help them feel more welcomed and embraced” by starting conversations*
- *Seek out the folks who may appear to be shy, or awkward, or wallflowers. Find ways to build trust and comfort.*
- *Engage them with a kind word to pull them out of their shell.*
- *Be the connector—introduce people to each other who may not otherwise connect.*
- *Be a conversation starter; point out what people have in common as you are introducing them.*
- *Encourage introductions: “There is someone I would love for you to meet!”*
- *Arrive early and stay late; connect with people before and after the event*
- *Create enthusiasm and anticipation for the person they are getting ready to meet.*
- *Act as you have personally invited them to a party and help ensure they have a wonderful time.*
- *Give people an experience, not just a conversation*

Find more career tips at her website www.susanspeaks.com/ or her career book ‘The Art of Action’.

*“Success largely depends on the relationships you build along the journey.”
-Jason T. Rogers*



About the Author –

Dwight Bain helps people rewrite their story through the power of positive change. He is a Nationally Certified Counselor and Certified Leadership Coach based in Orlando who founded a group of like-minded professionals called The LifeWorks Group. Follow him across all social media platforms [@DwightBain](https://twitter.com/DwightBain) for daily inspiration, coaching tools and positive resources to create lasting change. Find more resources at www.LifeWorksGroup.org
