

Preparing to Network

Here are some things you need to do to prepare to network:

1. Compile a list of contacts

You will find more information on this in your I (*Implement Search*) book, *Milestone 6, Get Your Message Out*. Also go to the e-learning programs on CRN.

2. Prepare and practice your professional objective and positioning statements

You will find more information on this in your A (*Assess Opportunity*) book, *Milestone 2, Determine Your Professional Objective*, and *Milestone 3, Create Your Communications Strategy and Resume*. Also go to the e-learning programs on CRN.

3. Prepare and practice your exit statement

You will find more information on this in your A (*Assess Opportunity*) book, *Milestone 3, Create Your Communications Strategy and Resume*. Also go to the e-learning programs on CRN.

4. Complete and refine your marketing plans and target lists

You will find more information on this in your A (*Assess Opportunity*) book, *Milestone 4, Define Your Target Market*. Also go to the e-learning programs on CRN.

5. Prepare and practice your accomplishments statements, or SOAR stories

You will find more information on this in your A (*Assess Opportunity*) book, *Milestone 2, Determine Your Professional Objective*. Also go to the e-learning programs on CRN.

Looking for Networking Contacts?

They are actually all around you; here are just a few:

- **Personal contacts** – family members (including your in-laws), friends, neighbors
- **Religious, alumni, professional organizations**
- **Former co-workers, suppliers, customers** (past and present)
- **Personal business connections** – banker, broker, lawyer, accountant, doctor, dentist, anyone you have written a check to in the past year
- **Community, political groups** – again, check your check book
- **Spouse's/partner's network**
- **Association meetings** – reading club, poker club, other hobby groups
- **Business/professional associations** – research online for ones that apply to you
- **Chamber of Commerce activities**
- **Other LHH clients** (current and former)
- **Social events of any kind**
- **Community service groups**
- **Extracurricular activities** (such as school or other training courses)
- **Your child's school** (such as PTA meetings, coaches, teachers, other parents)
- **Sporting events** – people you go to events with or play sports with
- **Job fairs or trade shows**

The Art of Schmoozing

As part of your networking activities, you find yourself at a conference or a gathering. If possible, offer to volunteer to help with the event – it gives you a role that can make it easier to access people. Here are some pointers on how to work a room.

1. Be prepared

Have your professional objective and positioning statement well practiced. Keep it brief – 30 seconds – and upbeat. Have your business cards ready.

2. Do some research beforehand

Find out about the organization holding the event by going to its Web site. Look to see if you know – or would like to know – any of the officers in the organization.

Try to find out who will be attending beforehand. Perhaps ask the sponsor for a list of the attendees and certainly know who the presenters will be. Research some of the attendees and presenters.

3. Act confident

Place your nametag on your right hand side so that it is in line of sight during a handshake. Wear something that is tasteful and that you feel confident in. Keep moving – don't sit. Move through the crowd confidently and smiling. Don't fold your arms and stand in a corner. Look approachable.

4. Have some conversation starters ready

Here are some conversation starters:

What did you think of the speaker/presentation?

How long have you been with this association/organization?

How long have you been in your profession?

How did you get your start in this profession?

What do you like most about your line of work?

In your opinion, what are some of the best companies to work for in this profession/area/industry?

What articles/books magazines/Web sites do you recommend to help me gather information about this profession?

Are you a member of any other professional association? How have they helped your career?

Are there any recruiters that you recommend I speak with?

Look for reasons to compliment someone – *I was admiring your shoes. I overheard you talking about _____ and was quite impressed.*

The Art of Schmoozing (Continued)

5. Keep your hands free

Don't put yourself in a position where you will fumble to give out your business card or shake hands. Don't load yourself down. Carry a small portfolio that you can use to carry your business cards (or a pocket will do) and to hold the cards you collect.

6. Check out the room

Scope out where people are gathering. If there is food involved, go there first. People tend to congregate – and be more accessible – around the refreshments. Check out who is in the room by scanning the nametags. Pick your “targets.”

7. Seek out the VIPs

Arrive early and approach one of the speakers or panel members before the program begins. This is where the research you did on them beforehand pays off. Immediately after the program, they may be busy taking to other people.

8. Position yourself strategically

If you will be sitting during dinner or the presentation, pick your seat strategically. Sit down next to potential contacts. Introduce yourself to those at the table or nearby.

9. Introduce yourself

Act like the host. Be the first to introduce yourself – smile and extend your hand as you do. Make and maintain eye contact. If you get into a conversation, ask for a business card before offering your own. Often it is easier to approach someone who is standing alone rather than try to break into a group.

10. Ask open-ended questions

Try to determine quickly whether a person would be of any help to you. Show an interest and ask open-ended questions. Use some of the conversation starters above.

If the person seems to know others, ask to be introduced to them. Or perhaps you are in a position to introduce people to each other making you appear tapped in and willing to help others make connections.

The Art of Schmoozing (Continued)

11. Look for ways to follow up

Perhaps a topic comes up that you just recently read about. Offer to send the person the article or information. It's a good reason to ask for a business card. Make sure you follow up on your offer.

12. Set up a system to maintain contacts.

Have some system to organize and keep track of contacts. Build into it a follow-up schedule so that you can continue to cultivate and maintain your networking contacts long term. Keep a file on individual contacts – their birthdays, favorite authors, any tidbit you can use.

13. Try to make at least *one* contact

Even one contact can make the event worthwhile. Remember, you are not there to find a job or a new boss. You are there to make contacts with whom you can reconnect later. Stay after the speaker/presentation is finished and continue to network.