

## **Networking Tips – Are you the shy, bashful type?**

*by Mark Monlux*

Are you the shy, bashful type? Have you ever found yourself going to a business event only to find yourself back at the office a few hours later wondering why you have nothing to show for it? And, it's not that you are a business wallflower either. You went, you chatted, you heard the speaker. But, as you parked the car back in the office parking lot you have a nagging feeling that you left your coat behind.

Your disgruntled feeling might be your instincts making you aware that you missed a networking opportunity. Well, before you berate yourself too badly and convince yourself never to step a foot outside your office again (thus insuring the demise of your business and career) allow me to provide some helpful networking tips.

### **1. Take Business Cards**

Yeah, it sounds obvious, doesn't it? But you know you're guilty of leaving them behind. So be sure to grab a dozen before heading out. We will get into how to hand out a card in #4.

### **2. Go Early**

Not only will this afford you a better parking spot, but it will also allow you more time to network effectively. The folks who usually show up early are key group members who tend to know everybody and the speaker who you came to hear anyway.

### **3. Wear that Nametag**

Not everyone has a photographic memory. Most of them can't remember their in-laws' names let alone yours. Do everyone a favor and wear your name where it can be clearly seen and if you get the chance to write your name, go big. Most of us wear glasses.

### **4. Card Etiquette**

Do not drop your cards on plates throughout the room. For one thing you want to meet people, not plates and for another, the group hosting the event may reserve the right of table distribution for the speaker or sponsors.

Have your cards ready in an easily assessable pocket or cardholder. Digging around in your wallet or purse makes you look like you're getting ready to tip somebody.

When you receive a card, take the time to read it over. Confirming the information is a nice way to engage and assures that you won't get a fax tone in your ear when you call later.

Write the date and any notes on the back of the card. You'll be glad you did later.

Have a pocket ready to slide the incoming cards. You may need to refer to it before the meeting is over and keeping them in one place will lower the odds they end up in the laundry.

### **5. Remain Engaged**

A common mistake is to travel around the room, seeking to hand out and collect business cards as quickly as possible. Your objective is not collecting cards to wallpaper your office; it is making connections. You don't want to take on the desperate air of a lonely single in a bar on Friday night. Take your time speaking with others.

Ask "feel good" questions like, "How did you get started?" or "What do you consider a challenging project?" You will learn more about your contacts' business than asking, "Hey, you got a job for me?"

Look for a familiar face who is talking with a stranger. Waiting for their acknowledgement will smoothly lead to an introduction.

Do not be dissuaded by small groups. Think quality rather than quantity.

Don't hog a person. Yes, you lead a highly sheltered life and meeting a person who deeply interests you can be very

intoxicating. But get a grip; they're here to mingle too and you don't want to be remember as cramping their style.

#### **6. Go with a Goal**

If you go with just the goal of listening to the speaker, that is okay. But, if you want to take the most advantage of your "shmooze" time, give yourself an objective. Seek out a potential resource for yourself or tell yourself you want to meet three new people.

#### **7. Follow Up**

Establish an informal communication quickly after the meeting. This is important because it is outside of meetings you will want to maintain ongoing conversations. Business groups may come and go but the connections you work at establishing will remain.

Follow these tips and you too can become a social butterfly.