

Networking for Success: Preparation

"Fail to prepare is to prepare to fail." Perhaps you learnt this when you were younger. I am sure you will agree how true it is for most things in life and particularly when you are about to be involved in a networking event. Be well prepared so you can gain maximum benefit from the event for you and your firm. It's no good thinking 'who will I meet?' or 'what should I say?' and as a result coming away wondering what you've achieved. So here are **the top ten tips** to help you prepare well so that you feel more confident, enjoy the event and are successful.

- 1. Know what the event is about.** Find out the purpose of the event, the topics to be covered, key points that will be made, if there will be any guest speakers.
- 2. Know the format for the event.** Find out the venue and how to get there on time, or half-an-hour early would be better; know the timetable for the event; and find out what refreshments will be available.
- 3. Decide how to introduce yourself confidently to build credibility.** You could simply say, 'Hi, I'm Mickey Mouse from Disney. I don't think we've met before'. Or more interestingly: 'Hi, I'm Mickey Mouse. I work in litigation to resolve disputes before they get to court.' When you introduce yourself they will say who they are.
- 4. Find out who will be attending.** Get a guest list showing names, positions and companies. Make sure you have enough business cards available!
- 5. Decide your Hot List** – the ones you want to speak to. List them in priority based on your objectives. Set yourself a target of speaking to at least five of your Hot List within the first hour. This will ensure you achieve success.
- 6. Find out the background of your Hot List:** relevant and current information about them and their firm. This could all be useful for opening conversations.
- 7. Decide what your objectives are in talking to each of your Hot List.** Is it to find out some information; or to agree to ring them for an appointment; or to tell them about a service or product? Be clear about your objectives so you are focused.
- 8. Think about how to start the conversation and lead into your purpose.** For example, 'I'm pleased you could come as I'd like to find out how you ...'. Or, link to a previous presentation: 'How would ... help your firm?'. Your aim is to show interest in them and their firm so a question is a good technique for this, and gets them talking.
- 9. Rehearse how you will smoothly draw conversations to an end.** For example, 'It's been a pleasure talking to you John and I will phone you next week as agreed. If you'll excuse me now, I must catch Jane Black before she rushes away.'
- 10. Find out which of your colleagues are going and decide how you can work effectively as a team on the day.** You will definitely not fail at your next event if you prepare using these tips. Good luck networking and enjoy the event.

Compiled by Judith Di-Castri