

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



322 Get Your Head Straight on Networking

Good grief, did he thrust his business card in my face while introducing himself? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, stuff to do and stuff not to do when it comes to networking. That's next, on The Extra Point.

Okay, we have to move fast. Here are 13 dos and don'ts when it comes to networking.

1. Do have a plan. I mean, what's your purpose for attending? You have one, right?
2. Don't talk too much. Some people get nervous and just babble. Here's the rule: listen twice as much as you talk.
3. Don't talk too fast. It really sounds bad.
4. Do occasionally breathe and give the other person a chance to respond. I have seen people talk for minutes and minutes, and you wonder when they'll run out of breath, but it goes on and on and on. Don't do that.
5. Don't run out of things to talk about. There's that uncomfortable pause that happens, just twice in a person's life. One, on a first date, and two, during a conversation at a networking event. There's that horrible feeling when you realize it's over, but you're both still there, wishing the floor would open and swallow you up — or at least swallow the other person up. Here's how to handle this one. Hold back a topic that you can talk about. Call it conversation insurance. If things start dragging between the two of you, whip out your conversation insurance topic and rev things back up.
6. Don't be too aggressive, acting like a dog in heat. "Can I get your business card, can we have coffee, how about lunch, do you think you're interested, do you, huh, huh, do you, huh?" Establish rapport first, then exchange cards or use your phones to make a digital connection.

7. Don't act like you know it all. Is any further discussion needed here? Don't do it.

8. Don't speak badly about your competitor. It makes you look small.

9. Do talk to a variety of people. Why is it that folks attend a networking event and then spend the whole time talking to coworkers and other people they already know? Here's an idea, talk to somebody you don't know.

10. After you tell your story, do ask the other person questions about their business and career. It's bad form if you don't.

11. Don't name drop. If you know a lot of influential people that's great. However, by coming off as if you're trying to impress someone with the names of who you know, it comes off as an ego play and that's not impressive.

12. Don't be on your phone. This is the chance to meet people with whom you can build a productive, long-term business relationship, and you're going to spend half your time, posting to social media? Now? Put it away.

13. I've mentioned this one before but it needs repeating. Do, absolutely do follow up with the people you meet at networking events. So many others don't. If you do, you win!

Networking can help propel your career if you master the dos and don'ts. Learn to do it right.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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