

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1463 Success Tips For the Scared Networker — Part 1

Networking events can be scary, especially for introverts who find themselves in a room full of strangers. The fear of approaching new people and initiating conversations can be paralyzing. However, with the right mindset and a few strategies, you can overcome networking anxiety and make meaningful connections. I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll do that, next on The Extra Point.

By nature, I am an introvert. You wouldn't think that, because I'm on the radio, train workers and speak in front of groups.

I like to say that I'm a recovering introvert, but if you put me in a room where I don't know a single person, it's uncomfortable.

I could easily turn back into the scared 19 year-old who didn't know what to do. Except now I know how to work under those conditions. Today, I'll share some ideas you can use if the thought of networking makes you sweat.

1. Get there early. Walking into a packed room is intimidating. If you arrive and there's only 10 people there, your stress level should be lower. On the other hand, it's harder to hide. But you're not going to do that.

2. Set a time limit and a goal for making good quality connections. If you think you'll have to stay for hours, you'll likely dread it. What I used to do is say, "Okay, I'm going to be here for 90 minutes and unless I'm having a great time, I walk out.

In that time I will meet three people who can be good contacts for my company. You may have to meet 10 to find those three.

3. Get off to a fast start. If you're nervous, the tendency will be to hang out by the food, or on the edges of the action, and end up watching people doing what you should be doing.

Here's what you have to do: Take a breath, look for someone who's alone, walk up and

introduce yourself. Don't worry if it turns out they are not a good prospect for you. This first one is just about breaking the ice.

4. If you're not sure what to talk about, ask questions. After the basic introductions, you might ask: How long have you been in your field? Why do you like what you do? Tell me about your company. Make a list of 10 good questions you can ask people.

Listen well to their answers and have followup questions. It's known as "active listening" and it's a super power.

So, what do I do if someone asks me about an issue I no nothing about? I have charged cash money for what I'm going to say next.

If you get asked that kind of question, you say "You know George, I don't know enough about that, but I'd like to learn. I'm interested in your thoughts. They grab the opportunity to give their opinion, you pick up some information, and all is good.

5. If you're going to eat, do it early. It's fine to nibble a bit, but don't load your plate like you think you're at a barbecue. This isn't dinner, it's networking.

The other thing is if you're stuffing your face, there's a greater chance that you'll spit up something on someone you want to make a connection with.

6. Go to meet people, not make pitches to sell your product or service. It's a turnoff. Once the basic connection is made and you think they might have interest in what you do, suggest a cup of coffee next week.

Do not thrust your business card in somebody's face as soon as you shake hands with them.

(Con't.)

Overcoming networking anxiety may take time and practice, but with the right strategies, it is possible to navigate networking events with confidence. I've got more ideas for this coming tomorrow.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: guamtraining.com

