



## The Meyer Partnership N.A. LLC

### Is your Networking, not-working?

We accept that when we network, we do it to gain something. That something could be a job, a referral, or a new connection. What sets apart successful networkers is their attitude or approach to the process. Too often people treat networking as transactional and overly functional rather than an opportunity to really connect with others, find common ground and share connections in a mutually beneficial way.

Of course, when you are looking for a job, it's understood that on some level you will be asking for something. That said, it's often the way we go about it that dictates how successful we will be.

The most successful networkers are those that give as much as they get. It does require a change in mindset, from "Can I have?" to "Can I help?" With that in mind, here are a few suggestions on how to achieve this:

1. What's in it for them? Whether it's a contact from a networking event, LinkedIn, or a referral from a friend, try to put yourself in their shoes. What do they get out of this conversation? Why should they talk to you and offer advice? Give them a reason and always consider what's in it for them.
2. Listen: Focus on what they are saying. Being a good listener is a great skill and earns respect. We've all heard it said... we've been given two ears and one mouth for a good reason... Don't rush to steer the conversation in your preferred direction. Networking is a shared experience and people who feel listened to are more likely to offer help or advice.
3. Listen more: This is a no-brainer. If you are listening carefully you are more likely to remember the details of the conversation. It will enable you to remember that person better and will lead to deeper conversations in the future. For example, identifying a common interest will almost always be remembered by both parties of the conversation and offer a real reason to stay in touch and develop the connection.
4. Ask questions: Asking relevant questions shows you have listened. Not only does that demonstrate your interest in them and what they have said, but you'll learn much more about the person and how they might be able to help you.
5. Offer to help: It's hugely positive to offer something – especially if you intend to ask for something in the future. Even if you lack direct familiarity in an area they are experienced in, you might still suggest people in your network that may prove to be useful contacts.
6. Ask for advice: Most people like talking about themselves and their careers and will be more amenable to provide advice than offer you a job. Asking for something (like a job) directly can be awkward and pushes people into a corner. Asking for advice acknowledges their experience and allows them to share it in a friendly and collaborative manner.
7. Preparation helps: Often the first question we are asked is "What do you do?" A well-crafted response will be much more likely to prolong a conversation. It doesn't need to be exhaustive, think in terms of a 20 second reply - a couple of sentences on what you bring to the table and can offer your next employer.
8. Ask for referrals: It's almost certain that if you are in the same field, they will know someone who could help. If you don't ask, they may not think to offer. However, the way you ask is important "Maybe you can suggest...?" or "Is there someone you think I would benefit from talking to?" appeals to people's generosity without the awkwardness of directly asking for a referral or recommendation.
9. Follow-up: If you have found an engaging and fruitful contact it's really important to maintain and cultivate the connection. Following up, even with something as simple as "I really enjoyed our conversation the other evening..." suggests you value them enough to remember them, and also lets them know you are an organized and proactive individual.
10. Be warm: Don't forget, people know a lot of other people and, even if being connected to an individual won't help you directly, there is a high probability that someone in their network can. Having a reputation for being warm, friendly and empathetic is a big part of successful networking.