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# The Ultimate Networking Event Checklist for Freelancers

Who you know—your network—can be more important than anything else in growing your freelance business. And networking in person at events is the best way to build a strategic network that leads to more referrals and other benefits.

Use this checklist to make networking less stressful and scary.

## Before the event

### ☐ 1. Develop your elevator speech and business cards

Take your elevator speech and plenty of business cards with you to the networking event. Your [elevator speech](#) is what you'll say so that people understand—in 30 seconds or less—what you do and how you help your clients. Include:

- The benefit clients get when they work with you
- What you do (your services)
- Who you work with (type of clients).

Think about your elevator speech before you head out the door. Practice it too, because saying it won't feel natural.

Your business card is a small but powerful ad for your business—and a way for the people you meet to remember you. Make sure your cards are clear, high-quality, and error-free.

Also make sure you have a [complete, client-focused LinkedIn profile](#) and/or [website](#). You want to impress the people you're meeting when they check you out later.

### ☐ 2. Dress for freelance success

How you [dress for networking](#) matters—a lot. People form opinions about you within a few seconds, and that opinion is based on your appearance.

Business casual works for most networking events. But if your clients are conservative, dress like they do.

Make sure your clothes are clean and neat. Project the right image and stand out in a crowd by wearing the right colors. For example, yellow means you're positive, blue means you're trustworthy, and red means you're assertive.

### ☐ 3. Schedule some meetings

Accelerate your networking by scheduling some meetings with people you already know and people you want to meet. Meet with people:

- During breaks
- For meals or drinks
- During sessions (sit together).

You can invite these people to meet with you:

- People you've met through LinkedIn or other social media
- People on the attendee list (if it's available before the event)
- People you find through a member directory if a professional association is hosting the event.

## During the event

### ☐ 4. Be approachable.

Smile. This will relax you and make it easier for other people to talk to you because they'll see you as reliable, relaxed, and sincere. Also:

- Stand tall and don't cross your arms.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Speak in a confident tone of voice.

### ☐ 5. Talk to people

Most people will be happy if you talk to them. Talk to people who you meet in line and people you sit next to at a presentation, session, or meal.

Prepare some opening lines, what you'll say when you first meet someone. Here are a few ideas:

- Why did you decide to come to this conference?
- What sessions are you attending?
- How did you come to be a [WHATEVER THE PERSON DOES]?
- What do you like best about your work?

You can also start a conversation by mentioning something about the person or simply saying hi:

- Wow, I love your [NECKLACE, TIE, ETC].
- "Hi. I don't think we've met before. I'm Lori."

### ☐ 6. Know how to end a conversation

Ending a conversation is harder than starting one. Here are some nice ways to move on:

- It's been so nice talking to you! Do you have a card?
- I don't want to keep you from everyone else, but let's connect. Here's my card.
- I need to run to my session. Take care!

## ☐ 7. Give more than you take

People who give more than they take are more successful than people who put themselves first.

Helping others without expecting anything in return is the best way to build trusting relationships with freelance friends, other colleagues, and prospective clients.

Focus on getting to know people:

- Listen to them.
- Ask about their work and their interests.

During and after the event give by:

- Sharing useful information and content
- Connecting them to people who may be useful to them.

## ☐ 8. Be strategic

Be nice to everyone you meet, but spend most of your networking time with the people you think will be most useful to you, and you to them, especially other freelancers. Don't spend too much time with one person at a networking event.

## ☐ 9. Have reasonable expectations

Don't expect to leave a networking event with new clients and dozens of deep relationships. And don't worry if you don't get to know a lot of people. The quality of the people you meet (in terms of their relevance to you) is much more important than the quantity.

## ☐ 10. Take breaks.

As freelancers, we're used to working alone. Take breaks when you need to. Go outside for a few minutes between sessions or have a few meals alone. Don't overschedule yourself.

## After the event

## ☐ 11. Give yourself a treat

When the event's over or at the end of each day of a multi-day conference, reward yourself for being brave. Here are a few ideas:

- Go for a walk if you've been indoors all day
- Have a glass of wine
- Enjoy a meal at a great restaurant.

Whatever it is—do something you enjoy. You deserve it!

## □ 12. Follow up

A networking event is only the first step in building your network. Follow up and stay in touch regularly with the people you're meeting. That's where the real results of networking will come from.

Follow up soon after the event with people you think could be helpful to you (and you to them). Do this by:

- Inviting the person to join your LinkedIn network and/or
- Sending an email to say "nice to meet you."

Stay in touch with your new contacts and key contacts you already know regularly so that:

- Clients think of you first when they need a freelancer
- Colleagues think of you first when they have a freelance opportunity to share.

Be polite and professional, and focus mostly on providing your contacts with useful information and resources. Once or twice year, mention your freelance services.

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## Free Guide on Networking for Freelancers

[The Ultimate Guide to Networking for Freelancers](#)

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