

The Networking Institute

50 Networking Tips



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Institute**

Introduction

These 50 networking tips were compiled by Kingsley Aikins who has lived and worked in 6 countries over a 25 year period. He found that networking was the essential ‘glue’ to survive and thrive.



At the Networking Institute, we firmly believe that the information age is over and we are now living in the networked age. In this age the measurement of power and influence is connectedness. The old vertical world of hierarchies has been replaced by a horizontal world of networks. We now need to continuously build our networks rather than waiting to build them when we think we need them.

Research shows that people with diverse networks live longer, are stronger mentally and physically, earn more money and are happier. The key to successful networking is to implement a large number of small attitudinal and behavioural changes as suggested in this booklet. By doing these on a daily basis they then become habits and rituals and the way in which you live your life.

1

Ask questions before giving opinions

Many of us spend the time when people are speaking to us preparing what we would like to say next. Don't. It is better to listen first and to talk later. Most people are either talking or preparing to talk and they see listening as a sign of weakness, of not being an expert.

2

Be curious

The best networkers are inherently curious. This is all about asking open ended questions and listening attentively to the answers. Become a generative listener, listen like an interviewer and see listening as an activity.

3

Expect surprises

You never know who people know. Don't make assumptions. Everybody has friends, family, colleagues you may want to meet.

One of the great joys of networking is its randomness. You just never know what a conversation might lead to.

4

Try something new regularly

We are creatures of habit and tend to live and work in 'silos'. Breaking the routine can lead to pleasant surprises. Say yes more often. Try new things. Read a lot. Have a life beyond your job.

5

Give the power of attention

Read the writings of Nancy Kline, author of 'Time to Think'. Listen with intent to understand, not with intent to reply. Our natural tendency is to interrupt people to tell them what we think on a subject and to give them advice. The truth is that they are not that interested. The greatest gift you can give anybody is the gift of rapt attention.

6

Be a giver, not a taker

Give to the individual, get back from the network. Every time you meet somebody think about what you can do for them rather than what they can do for you. The more you give the more you get. Most people decide to network only when they want something for themselves. Be different.

7

Focus on being interested rather than interesting

Show that you are interested by asking probing questions and listening to the answers. A really good question beats a really good comment.

8

At events, act like a host — introduce people

Make an effort – it is easy to do nothing. Become a connector at events – think about who might be interested in whom and connect them.

9

Practice purposeful networking

Set personal targets per event. Try to find out who is attending and don't leave until you have met who you want to meet. Follow up assiduously. Think of what introductions you can make. Use the latest technology to get known. Always remember to be 'Hi-Tech' and Hi-Touch.'

Connect

10

Be authentic

Build a reputation as being solid, reliable and trustworthy. At a time when trust is at its lowest level in history see this as an opportunity. Your reputation is what people say about you when you are not around.

11

Remember small things about people

People are always impressed if you remember seemingly small, trivial facts about them that may, in fact, be very important to them. Often this revolves around families, holidays, books, films, foods, etc.

12

Spend time with energetic people — seek out connectors

You tend to become like the people you hang around with. Hang around with optimistic people and guess what you become? Hang around with pessimistic people and...?!?! You are the average of the people you spend time with.

13

Re-organise your life to increase your chances of unexpectedly bumping into somebody who can tell you something useful

By doing certain things and going certain places make random chance happen in a non random way. Believe in serendipity and shaping your own luck. One conversation or one introduction can change your life. If you truly believe in this, it will happen.

14

Ask to be introduced

It is much more effective than making a cold connection. By asking to be introduced you are leveraging off other people's networks. Most people don't ask for referrals. Try not to cold call. Replace cold calls with hot coffees.

15

Help people become insiders

Then they feel part of something and have a sense of ownership. They start saying we should rather than you should. Should begins to be replaced by could.

Thank you

16

Have a written down thank you strategy

The act of thanking puts you in a very powerful position — maximise it. Encourage other people to thank. Look for opportunities to thank others and to show gratitude.

17

Clip and send articles and send handwritten notes and PS's

This exercise shows you are thinking of people when they least expect it. Nowadays people don't take the effort to write handwritten letters and notes.

This is a way to stand out. With typed letters always add a handwritten PS. These are generally read before the letter itself.

18

Never leave thank you 'naked'

Always thank people for something specific. Thank you, on its own, is commonplace and thus devalued.

19

You will be judged by others, like it or not, on first impressions

The cliché is 'you don't get a second chance to make a first impression'. The majority of first impressions are based on nonverbal communications.

20

Know what is happening in people's lives and wish them luck

This shows you care and have a concern for others and what is going on in their lives and in the lives of people close to them.

21

It's all about trust

People have lost trust in many things that were held in high regard in the past such as the government, financial institutions and the church. That makes it all the more valuable and desirable. Trust is not an event. Trust is not deserved. It is earned. You don't meet somebody today and they trust you tomorrow.

22

Look after the gatekeepers

These are the people who are between you and your contacts and they deserve respect, attention, courtesy and gratitude. Few people give them the time, respect and thanks they deserve.

23

Watch and involve spouses even/especially if they are quiet

All too often spouses get ignored because of an erroneous perception that they don't count. Very often it is the quieter of the two who makes the decision. Ignore them at your peril.

Build weak connections

We tend to focus on building strong relationships with people just like ourselves. Nothing wrong with that, except that we tend to know their views, which are often like ours, and also those of their friends. So try to spend time with 'un-likeminded people'. Build weak connections. Research has shown that weak connections can be more helpful than strong connections because they help you access diverse people with very different networks.

Think positive

People will forget what you said and what you did before they forget how you made them feel

Networking is an emotional business and involves the left side and the right side of the brain. The left side leads to conclusions - the right side leads to action. When facts come up against emotion, emotion wins.

Develop an invitational mindset

Be open to new people and ideas and that will attract like minded people. Be curious and welcoming. Suspend judgement.

27

80% of success in networking comes not from meeting new people but from maintaining contact with your existing network

Trawl your existing network and make a bigger and better effort. Refresh lapsed relationships. No use building a large database of very weak connections. We live in a world where it is not what you know or who you know but how well you know who you know.

28

Keep your word

Do what you say you are going to do. You will be judged on this so it is worth making a big effort here. Build a reputation for being reliable.

29

Talk to a competitor

You can learn about their networks and how they network. Enemies can become frenemies. Do phantom marketing and see how your competitors treat their customers.

30

Send something in advance of meeting

This shows that the meeting is important to you and you care about it and the people you are going to meet. Research in advance, going for example in LinkedIn. Look for things and people in common.

31

Always have the next project in mind

Be thinking of the future and what more can be done. Every piece of business should be seen as a downpayment on the next piece of business.

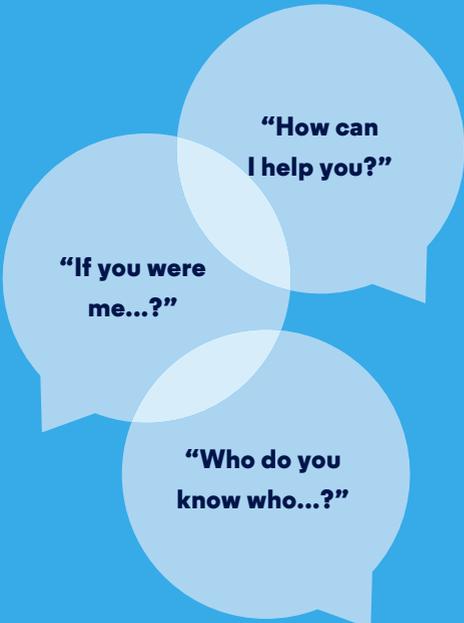
32

A contact is a seed — a relationship is a tree

Think like a farmer — relationships need constant tending and nourishment to ensure a good harvest. Farmers don't **hope** there will be a harvest — they **know** there will be a harvest.

Remember the 3 key questions in every meeting

The way to get to people you don't know is through people you do know so use that advantage. An introduction from a trusted contact means so much more than a cold call.



**“How can
I help you?”**

**“If you were
me...?”**

**“Who do you
know who...?”**

Three key questions

34

Return every call every day

Shows you care and you think the other person is important.

35

Ask for a repeat performance

Ask people to repeat what they told you in front of new audiences. Tell me again about the time...

36

Ask for advice

People love giving it and are often rarely asked. People sometimes imagine that asking for advice is a sign of weakness. Try using the following question – if you were me what would you do? And remember advice is usually free – a compelling price point.

37

Take notes even if you don't need to

Shows respect and interest.

39

Build public knowledge and private knowledge

Information comes in two forms, public which is available and accessible to all, and private which comes from your network and can often be more valuable. You can't compete on what everybody knows. Hence the value of private information.

38

Spend time with great networkers

Observe them, shadow them, learn from them, copy them. Join our group C.A.S.E. which stands for Copy And Steal Everything!

40

Business is a contact sport

That's why you have to network your way to success. The myth of individualism is over - the notion that you can achieve everything on your own.

41

The higher you climb in your career the more your success depends on your ability to communicate effectively

As you progress through your career the skills you needed to get your job become less important and relationships become more important. How well you do your job only contributes a small amount to career progress. Your image, reputation and the exposure you get all play bigger roles.

42

Creativity is not a solitary process

It happens within networks. Opportunities don't float around on clouds. They are attached to people.

43

Organisations are deeply siloed

Be a person who works across silos and build a reputation for bringing people together. One of the major challenges that companies face is finding a way to harness the great variety of networks that their own people have. Only when individuals break down these silos will the potential of these networks be utilised.

44

Become the 'go to' person on a topic

Become known as an expert on a topic and share your knowledge and expertise. Put your talents on display. Find opportunities to perform in front of others.

Collaborate

45

The global war for talent is over

Talent has won. Now the battle is to keep your talent. Also the talent knows that their network will be important for getting their next job. 80% of good jobs are not advertised. This is the hidden job market.

46

Recognise and reward continuous and cumulative support

Too often we fail to recognise long term support which leads to people thinking they are taken for granted. Research shows that the main reason customers are lost is because an attitude of indifference is shown to them. Look for ways to add value to people in your network even when they are not looking for it.

47

Get out — your desk is a dangerous place to view the world

A bad day on the road beats a good day in the office. There is nothing happening at your desk. Building strong and diverse networks means being out and about.

48

Realise that life is a game of inches and you only have to be a little bit better

Especially when deals are fifty/fifty. Identify the 'nudge factors' and "tipping agents" that will give you the edge in close deals and swing them in your favour. Your network can be key to helping you nudge a deal over the line.

49

Today's level of success and achievement will not win medals tomorrow

Have a process of continuous improvement. Success in the past is no guarantee of success in the future. What got you here will not get you there. Change is happening now faster than ever before in history and never will be as slow again. To create the future you have to be the enemy of today.

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**Networking —
work hard at it**

“The secret of business success
without hard work is just that - a secret!”

— Paul Getty

**And
finally**

The Networking Institute

Some of these are a little cryptic

Any questions, clarifications or comments
please feel free to email us at
info@thenetworkinginstitute.com

+ 353 1 210 8875

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