



PRACTICE PEARLS

## Ready to Make a Connection? Five Steps to Effective Networking

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Maybe you're spreading your energy too thin, or perhaps you're simply overwhelmed by the concept of networking and it's preventing you from even starting! Regardless of where you are in your networking journey and what your goals are, I'll help you keep it simple. Here's a starting point with five simple rules for effective networking:

### 1. Find Your Tribe

Before even diving into whether you should choose the chamber of commerce, rotary club, BNI, or events on Eventbrite (yes, this was me four times per week when I was first starting out), consider an initial time-saving step. Ask yourself, "Where do I already spend enjoyable time?"

For me, this was the gym and fitness studios. It then evolved into the extra effort of being a part of the local chamber of commerce once I was comfortable with the skill of networking. Maybe for you it's a "mommy-and-me" group, or the community college where you take art classes in your free time.



Finding your tribe is more than identifying where you fit in; it's also about making yourself known, seen and identified as a meaningful presence in that space. I recommend focusing your energy on one main networking hub to start. Where intention goes, energy flows.

## 2. Have a Sense of Urgency

How many times have you met someone and a week later thought, *Shoot, I never emailed that woman*, despite knowing it was a good connection to have? It takes practice to develop those networking muscles. Set a clear guideline for yourself about that first contact after you meet someone.

I have a rule of following up within 12 hours from first meeting someone. This allows for the conversation to be fresh in my mind, keeps me in *their* mind, and shows a level of commitment to connecting.

## 3. Lead With Value

Often, we think networking is about "getting" things: referrals, opportunities or more connections. But true networking is successful when you lead with value. With that first interaction with someone, your goal should be to determine what *you* could do to help *them*. This is something that takes practice, but really is for you to figure out.

Sometimes asking someone, "Is there anything I can do to help you and your business?" feels like a homework assignment for them. Putting in the extra effort to bring them value without them having to tell you exactly what to do feels like a gift. And when people are given gifts, they naturally want to give in return.

## 4. Follow Up

So, you've determined what value you can bring to someone when you meet them; now follow-up is the time to deliver. When you outreach within that first 12 hours, you want to include something in that follow-up email / text / LinkedIn message to add value.

This does not need to be something over the top! But it should be tied back to your initial conversation. Is there someone you could introduce them to? Is there a book or article that speaks to something you both connected on? Is there something they spoke to in your conversation that was helpful for you?

Thank them! People love hearing you took their advice or that they were helpful in some way. The goal of this speedy follow-up is to keep you fresh in their mind as someone who is giving.

## 5. Follow Up Again

Yes, it's worth repeating because this is where people drop the ball - or in this case, drop a potentially meaningful connection that could have moved the needle in their business! So often practitioners tell me they didn't hear back from someone, so they stopped trying. How many times have *you* missed an email or a text? If you are truly in the right tribe, leading with value, your additional follow-up will be welcomed.

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*Author's Note:* What's one skill you'll absolutely need on your networking journey? Messaging! My next article will be on effective introductions and storytelling. I'll be giving you templates to craft, practice and perfect your message for any setting.

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