Helping OWIT Members Maximize Your Networking Efforts
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We've all been there. You go to a networking event or meet a new contact, introduce yourself, have a nice chat, and then…. nothing happens. Or you may even try to follow up, but it doesn't really go anywhere. And your networking efforts are not resulting in new business as you had hoped.

Women, and women lawyers in particular, often struggle with getting their networking efforts to lead to new business and it's typically because either they haven't been armed with the right business development training to do it effectively and/or they don’t know how to do it without feeling salesy, pushy or uncomfortable.

We see many women network ineffectively because they are not being strategic enough about it. If you want to become more effective, you must first become strategic about the networking you do. Many women professionals go to networking events because they know other people who are going to be there or it's a general networking event that attracts a much wider net than where their specific prospective clients or referral sources are.

Also, most professionals don’t have a “game plan” when it comes to networking events, and as a result they get poor to mediocre results from it. So, you need the right “game plan.”

There are loads of proven tips on this and here are some of our most popular tips on what you should be doing at and after a networking event.

**Practical Tips:**

1. **Focus on developing your “KLT Factor” - the “know, like and trust” factor:** To become truly successful in business development, you must realize that it is the result of real/genuine connections between people. While closing the deal is a critical component of the business development process, you don’t want to rush it. Your objective, especially during the networking stage, is to focus on building your
“KLT Factor”. You do this by being genuine and sincerely listening intently to the other person rather than on sticking to your own agenda or thinking about what you are going to say next. You also do this by looking for ways you can help out the other person if it’s a key contact because if you focus on creating solid, mutually beneficial relationships, your efforts will pay off big time.

2. **Be inquisitive and ask a lot of questions (this is an especially good tip for shy or introverted women because the spotlight is on the other person):** Rather than starting out an initial conversation by asking what they do professionally, which is what most people do, (and which can be a conversation killer if you don’t have much in common based on their reply), ask questions to learn a bit about them as a person. That will more easily lead to additional conversations and allow you to look for commonalities. Your networking goals are to get to know the other person, to develop rapport and if it’s a key connection, then to ultimately tee it up for follow-up.

You can develop some stock questions to ask. Here are a few examples using OWIT, which you can apply to other networking groups:

- How active are you in OWIT and what things are you involved in with it?
- How long have you been a member or involved in OWIT?
- What do you like about OWIT (or this particular event/conference)?
- What are you hoping to accomplish/what are your main goals here?
- Who are the types of people you are interested in meeting?
- What other organizations do you belong to?

3. **Use their business card as a memory jogger:** Right then and there while it’s fresh on your mind, jot down on their business card a few words about your conversation, what they do and the types of people they help, an upcoming trip they may have mentioned, something personal about them, or something you have in common or want to follow up on so you don’t have to wrack your brain later when you want to remember that person or your conversation. Unless you have an automated system in place, you may also want to jot down the date and place where you met that person on the back of the card.
4. **No premature asking:** Don’t ask for the business or an introduction until you have developed enough of a rapport and relationship that the person knows, likes and respects you or thinks you are capable. Networking is not for pitching. Why? Because nobody goes to a networking event because they want to buy something. Everyone is there because they are offering something and are looking to connect with the right people.

5. **Always be sure to take stock immediately after the event and give yourself credit where credit is due:** Part of what can be frustrating with networking is that it can take a long time to see results because it’s all about developing genuine relationships and that takes time. That’s why it’s important to acknowledge every step of progress along the way. After an event, acknowledge that you met x number of new people, that you got x number of next steps out of it, that you reconnected with x amount of people, that you got to know a certain individual better. You measure your success through that kind of progress. It’s not about walking out of a networking event with a new referral or a new client ready to sign up...just like you wouldn’t walk out of a first date engaged to get married.

6. **90% of networking happens AFTER a networking event!** So it’s all in the follow-up! It’s all too common to drop the ball when it comes to leveraging a new key contact. Make the follow-up doable (you cannot and do not need to develop strong relationships with every person you meet). Be deliberate, strategic and personalize your approach.

Within 24-48 hours after a networking event, go through your stack of cards and pick 2-3 cards of people with whom you want to cultivate a relationship and focus your follow-up efforts on them. Send a thoughtful, personalized email to each of those individuals mentioning something specific that the two of you discussed (you can reference the notes you took on their business card) and do something to advance the connection.

Use our downloadable “**Template Email for Following up with Contacts after a Conference or Event**” at the link in this article to help you craft your follow-ups.
Over time, you want to build out a strategic relationship building plan and calendar regular outreach for your key contacts so that you cultivate long lasting, mutually beneficial relationships that help you achieve your goals. Here’s to your success!

**Template Email for Following up with Contacts after a Conference or Event**

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**About the Authors**
Marla Grant, Esq., CEC and Yuliya LaRoe, Esq., CPC are co-founders of 20/20 Leadership Group, an international coaching firm that helps lawyers become successful business developers, advance their careers and develop personally to thrive professionally.

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