



Oh No! Not Networking!

By Ann Rolfe

As a devout introvert, I used to hate networking events. I'm not good at small talk, I'm not at ease socialising with strangers and the business version of speed dating is my idea of hell.

Fortunately, networking is more than events where you balance a beverage in one hand, a snack in the other and need a third for business card exchanges!

Networking today is about making connections, building relationships and mutual benefit. There are a number of networks you'll want to cultivate:

Personal Learning Network – people, platforms and media for ongoing education and development. This includes mentors who are older, younger and in similar and different fields to you.

Professional Network – associates and leaders in your profession or industry that help you stay on top of trends and developments and open to career opportunities.

Peer Network – your cohort at work, from school or university, sources of information and opinions. Good for getting the low-down on potential employers and bosses.

Personal Support – friends and relatives who are there for you in a crisis, whether it's the looming work deadline when you have a sick child, your own health issue or lost love.

Social Network – the people you socialise with. Choose well, because there is a saying, cruel but true, "if you want to fly with eagles, don't hang out with turkeys". Put more positively by Jim Rohn "you are the average of the 5 people you spend most time with".

Social Media Network – a great way to know what's going on and be known, but "brand you" is out there forever, so making a distinction between private and public profile has never been more important.

Copyright © Mentoring Works 2016

I give permission to reproduce or share this article/post provided that you:

1) Reproduce it in full; 2) State that it has been reproduced or shared 3) Acknowledge my authorship by referencing as follows: Ann Rolfe (2016) **Oh No! Not Networking**. Mentoring Works blog <http://mentoring-works.com/blog/>

We all need these kinds of networks and we can consciously develop them, using these three steps:

1. Connect

Join professional associations. If there is no industry group for your field, look at groups for young professionals, women, business or special interest groups in organisations like the Australian Institute of Management. Serve on a committee at work, or a community and service group like Lions or Rotary, sports clubs, Toast Masters, Friends of (the museum, theatre, gardens etc.). Reach out to friends, family and colleagues to organise catch-ups. Don't say "we must get together some time." Pick a date and do it!

2. Build Relationships

Take a genuine interest in other people. Listen before you speak, ask before you tell. Get to know them and stay in touch. Offer support and encouragement. Be authentic yourself. Learn how to offer another perspective or opinion respectfully and value differences.

3. Make it Mutual

If you want to gain benefit from networks, you must first give. Volunteer, or at least be an active participant in groups and associations. Contribute and add value to online conversations. Reach out a hand of friendship to others. At a function, be the one to smile and invite the stranger into your group. Introduce them to other people.

If you adopt these three steps, even the dreaded networking event can be worthwhile!

Want to know more about mentoring?

Subscribe to my newsletter: <http://mentoring-works.com/resources/newsletter/>

Buy my book: <http://mentoring-works.com/product/mentoring-mindset-skills-tools/>

Contact me: ann@mentoring-works.com or phone **+61 2 4342 2610**

