

Networking Tips (for those who Hate Networking)

Networking tips for introverted real estate agents—yes, they exist!

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“Oh really?” you ask the stranger standing across from you at the cocktail party, “You’re responsible for quality control at a baseboard manufacturing plant?! TELL ME MORE!” Said no one. Ever.

Have you ever struggled to make small talk with a stranger at a networking event? We all attend these events for similar reasons, but it can still feel a bit awkward and artificial to connect this way. That said, networking is an integral part of your business, and the following tips could make the whole experience easier and far more fruitful.

Arrive Early: Unlike those wild parties you attended back in the day, arriving late may not be the best approach. If you get there early and introduce yourself to the people running the event, they are more likely to connect you with the people they know. In other words, you’ll have to make fewer “cold” introductions. Plus, when the host introduces you to other attendees, those attendees are more likely to have a positive impression of you since you seem to know the guy or gal in charge—something psychologists call “social proof.”

Figure out What You Have in Common: Finding common ground is easier at industry events, but when you’re meeting people outside your industry, you can’t spend all evening talking shop. In *The Art of Small Talk*, Debra Fine says to pay attention to the “free information” available. For example, if you’re at a Chamber of Commerce meeting, you know that you’re dealing with local business owners. That means you can talk about the local economy, how long they’ve been in business, and anyone you may have in common within the chamber. If you’re a member of a service organization, you can ask them about the philanthropic projects they’ve worked on in the past, and you can compare notes. Look for anything you might have in common and run with it. Most people are looking for an excuse to open up.

Bring Others into the Conversation: See that awkward guy fumbling with his smartphone in the corner of your eye? Be a champ and draw him into the conversation. It’s not only the right thing to do—it doubles your exposure to potential leads! Plus, it removes some of the pressure because you only have to hold up 1/3 of the conversation, and it’s easier to exit a three-person conversation when it’s time to move on.

Re-connect Online: Don’t forget this final step! Connecting through LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media sites is vital because each time they see your image online, they’ll think real

estate. They may not need to buy or sell a home for another 15 years, but when 2031 rolls around, you'll hopefully come to mind!