The Insider’s Guide to Networking

September 18, 2018

Ann Mehl ’95
Executive Coach
I. How I Got Here
II. Core Beliefs
III. Taking Stock
IV. Pitch
V. Best Practices
Relationships are all there is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals who can go it alone.

- Margaret Wheatley
Connect
Connecting is about meeting new people and keeping in touch with people you already know.
What Is a Coach?

A coach helps businesses and individuals become more successful by equipping them with the skills to improve performance.

- Clarify goals
- Elicit solutions
- Hold you accountable
- Move forward
Core Beliefs
#1
You Will Never Be Ready
Your personal brand is the sum of everything you’ve ever done.
Connecting is an all-the-time thing.
The best way to learn what you want is to experiment. Failure is part of the process.
Taking Stock
Managing your own psychology is the most difficult skill.
Examine your limiting beliefs.
If your self-image is negative, it will be difficult to get others to feel good about you.
Pay attention to your body language.
Live your life as if everything were rigged in your favor.

- Rumi
Your Tribe

✓ Who are they?
✓ Where are they?
✓ What do they crave?
✓ Where do they hang out?
Develop your distinct voice.

What do you have to add to the dialogue?
The art of building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships.

It's 8:00 a.m. at an early-morning business and technology conference at the Museum of Science in Boston. A model of SkyLab hangs from the high ceiling of the upper concourse, giving the room a dreamy feeling. The attendees, a mix of about 750 businesspeople, entrepreneurs, investors and venture capitalists, have come to meet clients, investors or jobs.

That's certainly what draw Diane Darling. Author of The Networking Survival Guide, Darling is a corporate consultant, business school lecturer, and sought-after expert in networking. As the conference begins, she strategically secures her name tag, pops a mint and strikes the crowd.

1. **Don't go in cold**
   - A week before, Darling researches the event or the Web to get a sense of the audience. “That way, I could do a little research and decide what information to break the ice with them,” she explains. Are those people entrepreneurs? Students? VC’s? Try to know as much as you can about the crowd before going.

2. **Travel Light**
   - Darling wears a tailored suit. There are no alliances blue suits here. I wear out this jacket, but not in a bad way. She carries a small leather portfolio from Levrone, about the size of a small wallet, with two pockets. One for business cards. In the other for cards going out. No fumbling.

3. **Walk the walk**
   - She walks through the concourse confidently, smiling. “Powerful people come to these events because they want to meet other skilled, talented people. Carry yourself accordingly. Don’t talk your arms. Look like you are having a good time.

4. **Start with breakfast**
   - Darling first heads to the long-breakfast tables. But not because she’s hungry. “People tend to be very accessible around the table. Talking and eating go together. It’s a great way to get started at an event,” says Darling, who always has her orange juice in her left hand so she can shake with her right.

5. **Who’s who**
   - Darling circles the room once to scan faces into her memory, giving an idea of who’s in the room before she picks her targets. Don’t read name tags while talking to people. Always maintain eye contact. Besides, soy-based glasses of name tags make you look lumpy and puffy.

6. **Approach VIPs first**
   - Darling starts out with one of the morning’s guest speakers, or Harvard Business School professor, a good 15 minutes before her presentation starts. Keynote speakers love to talk and can be great contacts, but after they give their speeches they’re always overwhelmed.

7. **Spot the lone wolves**
   - The more is crowded, so Darling next looks for people who are standing alone. “It’s easier to integrate into a group. Besides, individual contact is best: pre-on-one mics for the most effective networking. ‘Just make sure you smile as you approach.’

8. **‘And you are?’**
   - Give approach a name, not a position and ask her connection to the event. Host speaker. Museum of Science. A hotel. The goal is to talk enough about yourselves so you can connect to their interests and lives. Ask about your area, she says. “I went to Harvard Business School, we help companies and people figure out where to network and refine their networking skills. My name is Diane Darling” She says her name at the end so he is more likely to remember it.

9. **Press the flesh**
   - Let her approach when she first credit her hand. “It’s an old prop, a sign that you’re eager to interact,” she says. Plus, also, “It’s a natural part of a woman’s repertoire of body language, as it is for men.”

10. **Card exchange**
    - She’s available in her right pocket as she makes her rounds. On a white card in her left pocket as they make brief cards. She puts cards she receives in her left pocket so don’t get mixed up.

11. **Get an introduction**
    - After wearing the name tags, she opens the conference moderated, a player in the Boston media world. She’s a bit of a coffee, but rather than approaching him she enters a social conversation and asks her for an introduction. “An intro, like an impromptu, and the next time we meet, there will be a bit of association and that contact.”

12. **Give and take**
    - The moderator mentions a little out of practice at the time. Darling happens to know her. She offers to clear the prime position as a way of introduction. “Always try to be a connector, this person who brings people together,” she says. This not only makes Darling feel connected, but it also makes the moderator want you to return her favor.

13. **It’s a wrap**
    - After three hours, Darling has talked with around five dozen new contacts. She leaves the conference with piles to call these leads. The next week. “Remember, you’re not there to close deals or get a job. You’re there to get the right to follow up with a phone call or a meeting over coffee. Everyone contact that makes the whole day worthwhile.”

Source: Jeff Weissman | Originally appeared in MBA Jungle Magazine | 1/2003 xplane.com

XPLANATIONS® by XPLANE | Contact us at: xplane.com or 600/750-4447
Contact Diane Darling at: www.EffectiveNetworking.com or 988/907-0903

XPANION™ by XPLANE | Contact us at: xplane.com or 600/750-4447
Contact Diane Darling at: www.EffectiveNetworking.com or 988/907-0903

30
SUPPORT FROM YOUR TRIBE

- Have you significantly expanded your personal network?
- LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Are you well-known where members of your tribe gather?
- Do you regularly help others, share info. and provide resources to this group?
Pitch
I. Who are you?
(I am a _______ specializing in_______.)
(The majority of my work has been in…) 

II. Why are you the best at that?
(I am particularly skilled at…) 

III. Your call to action.
(What do you want?)
I started my career as an engineer in the gaming field. I spent the last 10 years leading the operations of businesses that are in need of a turnaround. I’m looking for a C-suite opportunity at an innovative startup that is in need of someone who can help take their operations to the next level.
I am a lawyer who is obsessed with lean business principles.

I work with people who feel stuck in their business or career.

I am a nurse with a passion for Italian cooking.

I am a former MD and my new interests are philanthropy and fashion.
Best Practices
Give when you don’t need anything.

Take less than you give-always.
Don’t be impatient for reciprocity; allow others time to return favors.
Approach is Key
For an introvert to enjoy an interaction it has to be worth it.

*And small talk is never worth it.*
Hello
(and smile)
The Law of Curiosity
“WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?”

This is a wonderful line of conversation because it gives you a chance to learn from each other.

Variations on this question are:

- What are you exploring right now in your work? Or outside of work?
- What are you most interested in right now?
The Law of Listening
The Law of Similarity
The Law of Familiarity
Every person has a “sphere of influence” of ___ people.
The gym.
Clubs you belong to.
Who do you know at your church?
Who do you see at the convenience store?
Your neighbors.
Every customer you've ever had.
Doctors/Dentist.
Who cuts your hair?
Holiday card list.
Your spouse's friends?
Former coaches.
PTA Board.
Email contacts.
Alumni directory.
BC Alumni community:

https://www.bc.edu/alumni/connect/bc_alumni_community/register.html

You will need your "Constituent ID" = a 10 digit number alumni.records@bc.edu or call 617-552-3440

Once you connect, create a profile. Searches you can do through the online community include: finding classmates, company name, job function, business industry, location...
Divide your contacts into groups:
1. Close friends, peers, mentors
2. People you were close with but lost touch
3. People you don’t know well
4. People you’d like to meet
Identify your Needs

Make a request to get specific help:

- Names of recruiters
- Intros to contacts
- Potential investors for a new venture
This is a fun exploratory expedition. By getting in the mix again with the discussions, you'll gain some data on the market & you'll build momentum.
Volunteer, do some research or take on a few side projects. There's a lot you can do -- with small pockets of time -- to get connected.
Don’t be daunted by the process. Don’t take rejection personally and keep moving forward.
"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou
Resources

- *Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi
- *The Networking Survival Guide* by Diane Darling
- *Self Promotion For Introverts* by Nancy Ancowitz
- *The 11 Laws of Likability* by Michelle Tillis Lederman
- *Power Networking* by Donna Fisher & Sandy Vilas
- *Small Talk* by Debra Fine

https://azzarellogroup.com/
Q & A

Ann Mehl '95
Executive Coach

ann.mehl@gmail.com

http://www.annmehl.com/painting-with-scissors/