



Connection Pros

For the past year or so, I have provided you with some of the best networking tips I know. Since this is the last issue of 2003, allow me to wrap up the year with two of my all time favorite tips.

The first one is to always remember to try and relax and have fun when you attend a networking function. When you walk into a networking function, how do you normally feel? Is your stomach in knots? Are your palms sweaty? Do you wish you could stay outside? Do you feel stressed, nervous, apprehensive, or worse? If you answered yes to any of these questions, I strongly encourage you to take three deep breaths and CHILL OUT! Networking is not meant to be a high-stress activity. It is a way for you to have the chance to talk to potential new friends and business acquaintances. You might meet that next huge client, find your next great employee, or land that dream job.

However, if after reading this column, your stomach is still in knots, your palms are still sweaty, and you still wish you could stay outside, maybe networking just isn't for you. Life is too short to do things you don't like to do. Remind yourself that this isn't life and death--it's just another part of doing business

The second tip for this month is to always keep a great attitude about life.

A positive attitude can lead to positive behavior and create success. An upbeat, positive person draws other people like a magnet. After all, who would you rather be around--someone who is strong and motivated, with the confidence to keep moving forward, or someone who stays stuck in one place, thinking of reasons why things don't seem to happen? It's no contest! Attitude will make everything you do work. Without it, you don't stand a chance.

You must walk into a networking session believing you will succeed. You must know, at the bottom of your heart, that you cannot fail, because if you think you might, you certainly will.

The way you think, day in and day out, affects all aspects of your life. Learn to listen to your internal dialogue. How might your thought patterns affect the way you handle stressful situations? If thoughts like, "I could never do that," or "What if I fail?," are present (like they are for most people), they can seriously impact your behavior, and in turn, every aspect of your life. If this is the case for you, you can change your internal dialogue. Try the following visualization exercise:

VISUALIZE SUCCESS

- Picture a successful outcome to your goal or problem. What will you have, or be able to do?
- Bring this picture to mind whenever you encounter a setback, or feel concerned about your success.

CONTROL YOUR INNER VOICE

- If you tell yourself you cannot do something, you set yourself up for failure. Counteract negative thoughts with positive thoughts such as, "I can and will do this with a little more practice."

REWARD A JOB WELL DONE

- Reward yourself when you know you've done your best. A reward is positive reinforcement for a job well done but remember to use rewards sparingly. Save them for those times when you really deserve them.

BE A POSITIVE LISTENER AND SPEAKER

- Be a positive with others and help yourself think more positively about your own challenges. Listen to your friends. If he or she is challenged by a project and you hear, "I can't do this," or "I will never understand," offer your friend positive reinforcement and suggestions. Tell your friend she would have a better chance of understanding the information by hiring a tutor, or setting up a strict study routine for the next week. (Thank you to the Academic Support Center, University of Mississippi)

I want you to walk in to your next networking session with the positive attitude that you can and will be a powerful networking professional. You will be a personal and professional resource for others and expect nothing in return. You will



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find out what you have to give, personally and professionally. You will overcome your fears and help other people do the same.

By maintaining this positive attitude, you will become a very powerful networking professional, your business will grow, your relationships will deepen, and your overall satisfaction with life will increase ten-fold.