

Essex Business Club – 10 Networking Rules

1. Forget "what is in it for me?" and adopt a "How can I help?" attitude
2. You have two ears and one mouth for a reason: listen more, talk less.
3. Have at least three open questions* ready, to help conversation flow.
4. Give your networking relationships time to develop.
5. Make sure you're on time and have your networking "Kit" with you: business cards, a pen, decent grooming and a can-do attitude.
6. NEVER put a business card in your pocket without looking at it.
7. ALWAYS be willing to include a fellow networker who looks as though they're having trouble getting into a conversation.
8. Be the one who gives the first referral – you have nothing to lose.
9. Let your fellow networkers know what you need and leave it at that – labouring the point is off-putting.
10. Thank everyone who gives you a referral and FOLLOW IT UP within 24 hours.

PLUS

- Be willing to set up one-to-one meetings outside the usual networking arena.
- Don't be a card collector: try "sniper" networking: decide who you really want to meet and focus on them. Aim to get about four cards that mean something, rather than 20 that are irrelevant.
- Develop a gentle but firm exit strategy: work out the form of words you're comfortable with, then practise saying them so that when necessary you can swiftly but politely disentangle yourself.
- Know WHY you are networking: who are you hoping to meet and who is your ideal client**?
- Be brief and to the point. Your life story may be fascinating, but save it until you're asked!

*Examples of open questions: "What kind of business are you in?" "Where are you based?" "What sort of customers are you looking for?" "How is your business doing?"

** Knowing exactly who your ideal client is will help not only your networking but your business. Try thinking of three levels of client: bread and butter – the ones who are regular and keep you on an even keel, cream – the premium clients who may boost your profits, and dream – the clients who can take your business to the next level.