

Be the Life of the Holiday Parties

A simple reminder of the do's and don'ts of Networking that are too often forgotten

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November 23, 2010

This past week, I reminded an audience of about 50 people on the basics of “good business behavior” at events. No sooner did I end the talk when a man in the audience approached me and, before I could even read his name tag or say ‘hello’, he thrust his business card into my face. (I had just covered this as a definite “don’t.”) I had to chuckle to myself. One guest had his Bluetooth headset in all night. (It clearly sends a message - “I may want to speak with you, but if someone more important comes along, buhbye!”) Some old habits die hard, I suppose.

As we approach the holiday season, we will all encounter more situations where we are interacting with rooms full of people - some colleagues and friends and some complete strangers. One never knows where these encounters might lead. In fact, I believe that no one can measure the true impact of events until at least twelve months past the date of meeting. Relationships take time to cultivate. And sometimes the person who you meet at an event is not ultimately the one who leads to a new business opportunity. He or she may connect you to another person, idea, or opportunity that helps you - and your business - evolve and grow.

I will not go through all 10 tips (although if you are interested, you can find them [here](#)). The “card in the face” thing is clearly a nono- and sadly one I’ve experienced several times as of late. The best approach is to wait until someone asks for your card or simply to ask your “new friend” if you may have his or her card. That usually leads to reciprocity.

Despite whatever heinous thing might have happened to you during the business day, attempt to be upbeat and warm at events. No one wants to speak to a terminally depressed or angry person - especially over cocktails.

If you see a new face or someone who clearly seems alone, make the effort to introduce yourself or include him in a group you are speaking with. Walking into a room full of strangers can be intimidating for even the most skilled networker.

Above all, make time the next day to followup. Send individual notes to the A-list prospects and most interesting people you met and add folks to your social networks and database. (But be sure to ask before you part ways if they would like to keep in touch that way. Don’t assume that just because someone gave you his card that he wants to be your BFF or received your weekly newsletter.)

So, be sure to be the belle (or whatever the male equivalent is) of the networking ball this season. Practice that warm smile and handshake, fill your card case, and remove that electronic device from your head, please!

This article was originally published in the New York Enterprise Report.