How to Work a Room

Amy McPherson
Associate Director
Career Services
540-231-6241, amcphers@vt.edu

Agenda

- Benefits of Mingling
- Roadblocks and Remedies
- Planning Your Presence
- Strategies to Work a Room

Goal: Have the confidence and tools to walk into a room and SHINE!

Mingling Benefits

- Feel better about yourself
- Make valuable contacts
- Make others feel more comfortable

5 Major Roadblocks

- Don’t talk to strangers
- Princess Diaries Syndrome: Wait to be properly introduced
- Prince William Complex: Good things come to those who wait
- Better safe than sorry, risk of rejection
- Get the wrong idea, looking for a pickup

Roadblock Remedies

Don’t talk to strangers

I feel uncomftable at networking events

Remedy:

- Make it so they’re not a stranger
- Find something you have in common.

Roadblock Remedies

Princess Diary Syndrome

Wait for Introduction

Remedy:

- Practice a self-introduction or Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch

- Who you are
- Why you are interested
- Why you are qualified
- What can you do for them

Go here for more help to create one!

http://www.alumni.hbs.edu/careers/pitch/

Let’s Practice Remedy 1 and 2

Pair up with someone you don’t work with regularly. Introduce yourselves and see how much you can find that you have in common in the next 5 minutes.

Roadblock Remedies

Prince William Complex:

People are supposed to come to you.

Create "trialogs"

Remedy:

- Move from GUEST to HOST
  - Arrive early, makes this easier to do
  - Meet people
  - Start conversations
  - Introduce others

Roadblock Remedies

Better safe than sorry,

Risk of Rejection

Remedy:

- If someone is rude, MOVE ON.
- Walk away.

Roadblock Remedies

Get the wrong idea,

looking for a pickup

Remedy:

- Check your dress
- Check your body language and your language
- Stick to business
- Move on if need to

PLAN FIRST!

Prior planning prevents poor performance.

From Susan RoAne: *How to Work a Room: Managing the Mingling*

Planning your presence

- Have a positive attitude
- Go with a goal
- Plan your introduction
- Bring business cards
- Prepare for small talk
- Eye contact/smile
- Practice shaking hands

Seven Strategies to Work a Room

1. **Manage your entrance**
   - Take a deep breath and stand tall as you walk into the room
   - Check out the layout of the room: bar, food, what else
   - Position yourself between the food and the entrance or bar and entrance. Why?
   - Look for people you know
   - Arrive early; avoid being late!

2. Use the Buddy System

- Split up once you arrive
- Introduce each other to various people you meet
- Have a signal if you need to be rescued

3. Find the "White Knuckle Drinker"

- Seek out people who are alone
- They are often shy; you are helping them out as well as yourself
- Make someone else feel comfortable, forget about your own discomfort!

4. Use nametags to your advantage

- Call people by their name
- Put something interesting on your own nametag
- Where to place your nametag

5. Work on great opening lines

- Basic: Hi, Smile and your name
- Possible topics
- The Magic 3: make them positive!
  - Statement
  - Question
  - Self-Revelation

Let’s practice opening lines

In the next 5 minutes, introduce yourself and shake hands with as many people in the room as you can. **Here’s the catch: try a different opening line with each person you meet.**

Time to get creative and try one of **the Magic 3!**

1. Statement
2. Question
3. Self-Revelation

6. Move in on conversations

- Join groups of 3 or more. Why not groups of 2?
- Be sure to let others join your conversations.

7. Move on

- Supposed to circulate; not rude to leave a conversation after 8 – 10 minutes
- Lines to use:
  - May I have your card? It was great meeting you.
  - Excuse me,
    - I am going to get a drink (or food).
    - I think I see a colleague.
    - Going to freshen up.
    - Need to make a phone call.

7. More on Movin’ on

- Make sure you move to another part of the room as you excuse yourself.
- Don’t sit down
- Be sure to thank the host/hostess before you leave an event

After the event:

Follow up with people you met!

- Handwritten note
- Email
- LinkedIn Connection

Sources

Presentation created by Claire Childress,

VT Career Services

- Susan RoAne. *How to Work A Room: A Guide to Successfully Managing the Mingling.*
- Devora Zack. *Networking for People Who Hate Networking.*
- Judith Bowman*. Don't Take the Last Donut: New Rules of Business Etiquette.*
- Deborah H. Jacobs. How to work a room like you own the place. http://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahljacobs/2012/02/29/how-to-work-a-room-like-you-own-the-place/