



Networking is important and can be fun - by Harry Zlokower

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One of the few marketing and public relations arts that does not seem to change much over the years is networking to make and develop good business development contacts, often at conferences and meetings but seemingly anywhere including parties, events, airplane trips, and online.

Some people are really good at it, but many, present company included, can find this real time marketing daunting. What do you say? How do you make contacts and build worthwhile relationships at a lunch, conference or party?

“Practice, practice and practice,” advises Lisa Chau, coach and author of “Small Talk Techniques: Smart Strategies for Personal and Professional Success” (Rockridge Press) who spoke at a recent Zoom event I attended at the Dartmouth Club of New York. Ms. Chau emphasized small talk is a skill and those who are good at it spend some time doing it. Look for polite conversation starters, share some ideas. Ask yourself, “Why should people get to know me?” A point to consider: Be ready to volunteer comments without the need for reciprocation. Look for a reason, if appropriate, to follow up, something you both have in common, a deal you share interest in or a service one or both may wish to offer the other.

I hasten to add, bring plenty of business cards and/or some takeaway that your contacts can keep to remember you. At the same time record the identity and affiliation of your contact, even if it means jotting notes or posting to your phone. A key is to find things in common: job, family, location, the market or program at a particular conference you are attending. Have fun and understand that an overriding outcome of networking can be “luck”. But unless you get out there, nothing can happen. “Luck,” said Ms. Chau “is important for success.”

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