TOP TEN RULES FOR NETWORKING!

#1. SET A GOAL FOR THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE YOU'LL MEET
Some people go to a meeting with only one goal in mind: the time they plan on leaving! Set a goal regarding the number of contacts you want to make or the number of business cards you want to collect. Don't leave until you meet your goal.

#2. ACT LIKE A HOST, NOT A GUEST
Pretend this is your party. You would want to meet people and then introduce them around. This will help you gain valuable networking skills and get great exposure to many business professionals in a short time. Networking is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week activity. Don't limit yourselves to networking just at mixers.

A notable networker has two ears and one mouth and uses both proportionately. Show a genuine interest in others business. Find out about their business. Ask them the "W" questions. The answer to each of these questions will give you a better grasp of the individual and the type of work he does. Thus, you are in a better position to refer them to others or ask different questions about their career.

#4. BE OPEN TO A LEAD OR CONNECTION WHENEVER POSSIBLE
Many people will offer information that would be of interest to you. These leads or connections could help you grow your list of contacts in the career field you are interested pursuing. Be grateful and remember to thank them for the information.

#5. DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER INTEREST OR GOALS
After you learn what other people do, tell them about your career goals. Be specific, but brief. Don’t show up and throw up, be succinct. Try to do this in 90 seconds or less.

#6. ASK FOR BUSINESS CARDS WITH THE PEOPLE YOU MEET.
Ask for business cards when you meet with an employer of interest. This sets the stage for networking to happen. When used properly, the business cards you collect can be instrumental in helping you remember people, initiate follow-ups, discover opportunities, and access information and resources.

#7. SPEND TEN MINUTES OR LESS WITH EACH PERSON YOU MEET DON'T LINGER WITH FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES (during the open networking part)
Remember Commandment #2, if you set a goal to meet a certain number of people you have to make sure to allot enough time to do that. The person you are talking to probably need to talk to others also, don't spend your entire time with one person. Learn to leave conversations gracefully. Tell them you have a few more people to meet, your drink needs refreshed, or you want to sample the hors d'oeuvres.

#8. WRITE COMMENTS ON THE BACKS OF THE CARDS YOU COLLECT.
This enables you to recollect conversations easier at a later date. I know very few people that can recall the 20 different conversations from the 3 hour networking function they attended two days ago. Just make small notes, for example:

"... wants to create an internship program"
"... interested in meeting Debby Peters for some consultation"

Record anything that will help you remember what you talked about, or can help you do business with that person.

#9. BE PROFESSIONAL.
This is your opportunity to network with employers and to learn more about different career fields. This is not the time to ask people for a job or load up on drinks and food. Remember, the connections you make tonight could lead to a job in the future.

#10. FOLLOW UP WITH THE PEOPLE YOU MEET.
Remember, good follow-up is the lifeblood of networking. You can follow the first 9 commandments religiously, but if you don't follow up effectively, you're wasting your time! If you promise to get back to people, make sure you do. Even if you don't promise, call them or drop them a email. If you follow up, networking can be empowering. Have a follow up system, so that you can stay in touch with the people that you meet.

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