

Five rules of networking at conferences

Networking meetings have become an inseparable part of business conferences and have gained major recognition over the past few years. However, to make the most out of networking as a tool for acquiring new business contracts, we should remember a few rules.

Meet your conversation partners

- One of the most important tasks you need to focus on, if you want to participate in a conference, is relevant research. It would be advised to check who you are meeting with during the event ahead of time. Learn about their industries and interests. Set your own preferences, too, as far as your potential clients are concerned. This way you will save a lot of time - says Barbara Piasek, the co-founder of Wolves Summit, a conference focused on networking.

This time may be used to meet as many people as possible. Acquiring knowledge about our conversation partner is also of great use in the discussion itself. Let's not spend it asking for basic information, one, you can find beforehand. Instead, concentrate on professional issues, getting the essential content and, primarily, a new business contact.

Conciseness above all

If we can describe ourselves and our company in 20 or 30 seconds, brilliant. If not, we still have enough time to prepare and make a list of key messages we want to communicate to all interlocutors concerning our business. The secret to successful talks is always a precise presentation of your offer and thereby acquiring potential business partners. It doesn't mean we can give up on casual questions at the beginning - all participants care about maintaining positive relations with the newly met people after all. According to Barbara Piasek, the meeting's length is just as crucial - *each and every one of them should be long enough to learn about mutual needs, scope of activities and to exchange contact information, but at the same time short enough for the interlocutor not to get bored* - she explains - *such conferences ought to be meant for meeting the highest number of people, so let those discussions limit to a few minutes and an exchange of business cards . The conversation can also be continued after the event.*

Take an initiative and grab a chance

How to tap into valuable contacts? Let's not be afraid of taking an initiative and benefit from the fact many people from various industries appear at the conference. The best way to be remembered is being on the move. It is worth arranging short meetings in recognizable spots of the conference - by the reception desk or buffet and changing seats after every break in the agenda. It is the perfect opportunity to introduce ourselves to strangers sitting next to us and chit-chat. All chances, which enable us to meet others, should be taken, even if it's a queue for coffee or lunch. An open attitude and a positive facial expression are desired at all times in this case, since they break the walls between strangers and encourage discussions.

Maintain new contacts

We must never ignore contacts we managed to acquire. The business cards collected during the event are more than small pieces of paper. They are our potential investors and

business partners, on whom our success depends. A wide network of contacts is worthless, if we do not maintain the newly established acquaintances, though.

- *It is good to arrange a predicted date of contacting during the conference, best if it's within one week. It's a sign that we take all new business relations seriously, even when we don't expect to establish a permanent relation* - sums up Barbara Piasek.