



Industry Events: Who to Talk To...And Who to Avoid

Industry events are crowded. After all, you've got the industry en masse - a majority of qualified industry buyers and sellers gathered in one place. Throw in the industry media into that mélange plus a sprinkling of others and you've got a huge morass of people to deal with -- all of whom want to network.

How do you pick and choose where to spend your time?

First, do your research before the show. Show literature will give you some idea who is going to be there. Take some time to learn about them. Determine if there is common profitable ground to be found between you. If so, make a point of seeking them out.

Also, every industry has what are known as 'king makers'. These folks may be influential themselves, but they are also known for playing a prominent role in helping others achieve greatness. They may act as mentors, advisors, or even partners. Discover who they are and make a point to seek them out. You definitely want to make sure they get to know who you are.

You never know who may be helpful in the long run, so it behooves you to be nice to everyone. Not only do people change positions with incredible frequency, they also have very long memories. The woman you were snippy to when she was 'just' an assistant is less likely to warm to you when she's in charge of a regional branch.

People often bring their spouses or partners to tradeshow, conventions, and other industry events. Don't fall into the trap of ignoring them because 'they're not in the business'. Recognize husbands, wives and partners as powerful influencing forces.

Five rules of thumb for networking:

1. Do your research
2. Know what you're saying -- and to whom!
3. Seek out those who are influential and respected
4. Always be polite
5. Keep all humor clean and inoffensive

Who to Avoid

Just because someone shares your industry their outlook on life, ethics, morals, or approach to life may well differ from yours. There are bad apples in every field, and they should be avoided.

Of course, it's hard to tell who these bad apples are when you're new to the event and are meeting people for the first time. What should you do?

- Listen more than you talk.
- Watch who the people you respect choose to associate with.
- Tune into your sixth sense and trust your gut. If someone is imperious, rude, crass, and offensive, they still might be very successful in business -- but you might want to limit your interactions.



Remember, people tend to judge you by who you associate with. If you're seen at events with the fellow who always tells racist jokes, for example, you may well be branded accordingly. Luckily, this works both ways. If you're seen with quality people, people assume you're quality as well.

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