

Top 10 Ways to Build Social Capital by Lillian D. Bjorseth

- 1. Polish your face-to-face skills.** No form of networking is as effective as in-person. It is the number one way to start building relationships. Bolster your confidence, sharpen your presentation skills, learn the art of conversation ... and quit relying so much on an inanimate computer.
- 2. Make networking a part of your written strategic marketing plan.** Clarify your business focus. Determine your target market and how you can reach them or people who know them. Decide logically what organizations to join and what conferences to attend so you carry out your relationship-building activities in a planned, productive fashion.
- 3. Work an event, not just a room.** Just as the Chicago Bulls didn't win six championships just by how they "worked the floor," you also won't get the full benefits of networking unless you design your game plan and practice beforehand. Develop a winning attitude (this is worthwhile event for me to attend!) and continue to hone your communication skills so you can execute when you get to the "room." A master networker is a master communicator.
- 4. Make a professional first impression through your appearance and demeanor.** People decide 10 things about you within 10 seconds of meeting you. Decide what impression you want to make and then how to make it through the colors and styles you wear, your walk, posture, handshake, gestures, eye contact and facial expressions.
- 5. Create a 10-15 second Verbal Business Card.** This front end of your elevator pitch should be benefit-laden to inform others about what's in it for them and entice them to want to talk with you. Save "who you are" and "how you do it" for later.
- 6. Start conversations with open-ended questions.** This helps to avoid the "Yes" and "No" scenario that soon leads to silence and maybe even perspiration! Ask questions that will carry the conversation and provide information to you simultaneously.
- 7. Know how to end a conversation.** Since networking is planting seeds, not sales (harvesting), keep your interactions to about 10 minutes per person. That's ample time to make a positive impression and decide if the person is someone with whom you would like to build a relationship. It's okay to plan endings just as you plan icebreakers.
- 8. Follow up.** Whether it is to acknowledge your initial encounter, set up a meeting or share an article or a contact you promised, do it! You will stand out positively. Choose from more than a dozen methods that you know best fits the other person's style.
- 9. Use on-line methods wisely.** These are excellent ways to *maintain* and *grow* relationships, not necessarily *start* them. Choose those that help you meet your goals. Confirm that people are who they say they are before referring people you have never met.
- 10. Give before you plan to get, and don't keep track.** Banks don't allow you to withdraw money (without interest!) before you make a deposit. Neither does the universe. When you understand and live by this premise, you will benefit from the networking process. You will achieve top-of-the mind positioning and build relationships that last!

Lillian Bjorseth helps people nationwide build a new kind of wealth – social capital – by improving their networking and communication skills. Her published works include the new third edition of Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last. Read more about Lillian on her speaker and expert pages.