

## Tips on Working a Room By Mary E. Rauch

A business mixer can be a wonderful opportunity to present oneself professionally and send messages of credibility, expertise, and self-awareness.

On the other hand, it can be a disastrous time to step on people's toes (literally and figuratively), reveal a streak of self-centeredness, and imply we care more about technology than we do about people.

Of course, the worst-case result is someone walking away from the brief encounter thinking, "Man, what a jerk!"

"Working a room" requires preparation, thoughtfulness, self-discipline, and appreciation of some basic Do's and Don'ts.

- Business Cards: Consider a business card exchange to be the same as handing someone a Polaroid snapshot of yourself—Are "you" up to date? "Neatly" presented (or bent and soiled)? Grabby or gracious? Selective or indiscriminate?

On the receiving end of the card, at least pretend to look at the card, make a comment and/or ask a question. Don't just shove it into a pocket or purse. The subliminal message is that you will toss it as soon as you leave the event. If the person receives this message, you can be sure your card will end up in the same trashcan.

- Nametags: Wear it on your right side, so the eye can travel up the handshake arm, directly to your name. (And always "present" your name—both first and last. Don't assume we'll remember who you are.)
- Shaking Hands: Make it energetic and engaged but not bone-crushing (a handshake is not an arm wrestling contest). Make it gender neutral. Use the thumb-web to thumb-web technique, which ensures a "complete" handshake and eliminates painful finger shakes. Eliminate jewelry on the right hand and wrist which interferes with the handshake....or jangles a tune with each shake.
- Logistics:

++ Move out of the doorway; then scope out where you want to go and why

- ++ Carry your drink in your left hand, leaving the right hand dry and unencumbered for the firm, fully confident handshake you will be giving
- ++ Eat before you go. It's impossible to juggle a wobbly plate of food, a wine glass, and shake hands professionally
- ++ Plan and practice aloud your "presentation" of self, sometimes called "the elevator speech" (no more than 45 seconds in length).
- ++ Move to people you don't know. Don't huddle with those you do.

- Technology Etiquette:

- ++ Don't go in looking like Techno-Man. Remove devices from your belt and ears.
- ++ Put your cell phone on vibrate mode, unless you are waiting for a call about a heart transplant. This is the place and time to make people your primary focus.
- ++ And eye contact is for people, not for checking messages.

Blackberry

In the world of business as in theatre, we are always "on." A business mixer, however, truly puts us in the spotlight. With a little strategizing and a lot of self awareness, we can impress our "audience" and send them the next day to the phone or web site, confident they want to take the next step of building a business relationship with you.

Make yours the business card they keep!

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