



Tips For Networking At A Table

1. Make the introductions. Proceed as if you are the host of the table. Exchange business cards immediately but don't deal them like a deck of cards. Shake hands, say your name and company, then offer your card. It spares you the awkwardness of wondering when you should offer your card.
2. Start conversation by asking questions. Every question delivers an impression, so ask those that make you look smart, informed, and concerned. Samples include "What major changes do you foresee in your industry?" "What have you found to be the best ways to get the word out and promote your business?" "How would I know if someone I meet would be a good contact for you?"
3. Practice answering the common question "What do you do?" You'll almost always be asked that. If you have a short, interesting answer that begs another question, you have branded yourself and your organization. (This is not the time for a sales pitch, just an introduction to you and your firm.)
4. Avoid monopolizing the conversation.
5. Bring at least 7 business cards to all events with seating. Most functions have tables set for eight so 7 cards give you one for every person at your table. However, that number is a bare minimum. You can never have too many cards. If you forget your cards, go back and get them. They are that important!
6. If you are at the event with a colleague, don't sit right next to them. Leave at least two chairs between you. That way, you each meet four people instead of two.
7. If there is an opportunity to ask the speaker a question, take it. If possible, sit up front and to one side so most of the audience will see your face when you ask a thoughtful and concise question. State your name and organization before asking the question and then silently congratulate yourself for introducing yourself to everyone in the room.
8. If you promise to do something, then do it. Reliability will build your reputation. Bring a notebook or PDA to jog your memory.
9. If you see someone you'd like to meet, go over and ask if the seat next to them is taken. The exception to this rule is if there is reserved seating.