



# Networking for Nerds

**Top 10 Practical Tips to overcome  
the nerd's fear of networking.**

There are many nerds out there that are great at what they do. They could be an IT Pro, Web Designer, or Developer. Despite their incredible skill, they still may find themselves struggling to get new clients, and get their name out. The fact of the matter is, in most cases you need to get off your rear and meet people. Meeting people may take place at a chamber event, or even a bloggers convention, either way, networking is a vital part of business.

The question remains, “how does a nerd network?” Some nerds are clearly more comfortable in front of the computer screen, and have no desire to meet new people.

Hopefully, this guide will give you tricks to break the ice and put yourself in a situation where you are networking before you know it. You don't have to always network by asking the question, “So, what do you do?”

This Presentation was originally given by Justin Brady at Ignite Des Moines on November 6th, 2008. This PDF includes one bonus tip at the end. Please contact Justin with questions or comments.

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### **Practical Tip One:**

*Wear a name tag dang it.*

A name tag represents you, and your company identity. There are plenty of networking opportunities you may miss because you don't have a name tag on.

- Someone may remember you from somewhere else, but is uncomfortable to approach you, because they forgot your name.
- Perhaps they know someone else who works for your company, but never connect the dots.
- Perhaps they have seen your company elsewhere, but don't see a logo / name tag, so never know your company is present.

Result: At a networking event the goal is to make yourself approachable, wearing a name tag makes you more approachable, and also is a potential conversation piece.

### **Practical Tip Two:**

*Camera + Photos + Business Card = WEB TRAFFIC*

If you are an avid blogger this one is for you. When at a networking event, bring a camera with you and ask to take group shots for your blog. After taking the picture collect business cards to make sure you get their names right, and inform the group you will have their pictures posted later that night. Remember to give them a business card with your web address on it.

Result: This accomplishes several goals in one. You are able to collect business cards, you are able to get your business cards in their hands, you have a pictures to remember them by, AND you get web traffic. People love to see themselves and tell their friends they are on the web.

### **Practical Tip Three:**

#### *Piggy Backing*

When talking to someone at an event, hold some of your questions for later. When they go off and make new connections, make sure to follow up with this saved question and enter the conversation. This way you don't have to meet the new people on your own. If you see contacts of yours in conversation with people you don't know, make sure to ask your contact a legitimate question, and thus easily enter the conversation.

Result: You will easily meet many new contacts at each event, and you will never have to actually start the conversation or break the ice yourself.

### **Practical Tip Four:**

#### *Picking off the lone ranger.*

This tip may require more initiative on the nerds part, but it could prove beneficial. At each event, there is the person that is off alone. Chances are they are in the same boat you are and really want to network but are uncomfortable. You can share their table, or tie your shoe near them, and try to engage them in conversation.

Result: This can be effective for the simple reason, that they want to network just as much as you do. They are an easy target because they want to be approached by someone and you can help!

**Practical Tip Five:***Wear an “Ask Me About” Tag or Pin*

This one is really self-explanatory, but worth mentioning. Everyone is at this event to talk to others, meet friends, and network. Use that as leverage by wearing an “ask me about” tag to get attention. It helps to make the question interesting or funny. Sure it seems cheesy, but it will work. Make sure your question isn’t, “Ask me how I can save you money on your new car” or something similar. It shouldn’t be an obvious sales pitch.

Result: Most people at these events are looking for an excuse to talk to meet people, give them a reason to talk to you.

**Practical Tip Six:***Be the First To Arrive*

If you are the first to arrive there are fewer people present. This way it should be naturally more comfortable for them to approach you, or the other way around. This does take a bit of initiative on your part, but it is easier than competing for attention.

Result: When new people arrive you are the natural choice for new conversation. Conversation is easier this way.

### **Practical Tip Seven:**

#### *Be the Last To Sit*

If the event you are attending is a sit down event serving dinner, dessert or whatever else. Make sure you are one of the last to sit. Excuse yourself to the bathroom if you must. If everyone takes a seat before you, there is a good chance you will be forced to sit with people you don't know. Of course, this means new relationships and contacts. Best of all there is no way this looks intentional. It just appears as though you need a seat.

Result: You are guaranteed to make new connections if you are sitting at a table with no one you know, and chances are you won't have to initiate the conversation.

### **Practical Tip Eight:**

#### *Bring Paper, Forget the Pen*

This tip could very well be the cheesiest tip, but my fake statistics prove it works. When you find yourself needing to write something down (you can make up a reason) you can simply ask someone you would like to meet for a pen. Tell them "thanks, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I'm with \_\_\_\_\_ and I will get it back to you." Whether or not they want it back RETURN THE PEN! This is the critical step. After you return that pen, you are now in a situation to easily start a conversation. They already know who you are.

Result: Not only does this break the ice, but when you follow up later, there is a better chance they will remember you. "Oh yea, I lent you my pen!"

### **Practical Tip Nine:**

*Ask. Ask. Ask*

When meeting new people it is hard to not talk about your own products the entire time. That is why you are there right? Wrong! You are there to network and make connections. Everyone wants to talk about their products and services, so let them. Make sure to listen and ask relevant questions. If you don't know about their field or the topic, be honest and tell them you don't know. This just guarantees a better conversation and trust me, they will like you more, everyone likes a listener. This rolls right into tip 10. Read on!

Result: You can always follow up with your own information later, the more you know about them and the longer you talk, the more memorable you will be.

### **Practical Tip Ten:**

*Get Their Card, Follow Up*

Let's remember you are networking for a reason: To make better connections and sales. After you have gone through all this hard work, don't forget to get their card. It is important to get your card in their hand, but much more important to get their card in yours. If you ask for someone's card, 9 times out of 10 they will reciprocate. Getting their card ensures you can follow up later. It is important to know that following up is not an option, it IS mandatory!

Result: Getting their card and following up is more than your competition is doing. By simply writing a hand written letter (gasp!) you can edge out your competitors. Who doesn't love getting a letter? Familiarity starts to turn you into a relationship, not just some guy/gal.

(Want proof? Send me an email and I will send you a hand written letter, I bet you will enjoy getting it)

## **Bonus Tip (And maybe the most important)!**

### **Practical Tip Eleven:**

#### *Help 'Em Out!*

If you are doing all of the above tips, I am willing to bet you are a networking expert by now. There is nothing that is stopping you. May I suggest one more tip that will keep the business flowing? Because you are networking and meeting new people, chances are you will find two individuals that could do business together, but have not yet met. When you do happen upon this circumstance, (it WILL happen) make sure to introduce them! Make sure to either set up a time to introduce them or simply put them in contact with one another.

Result: This will not appear to help you in any way or form, but it will benefit you later. A referral gets a referral. Whomever you introduce will remember you were the one that introduced them. They will both naturally want to return the favor, and they will like you better because you are more than a business partners, you are a resource.