THE
INTROVERT'S
ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
NETWORKING
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The Introvert's Ultimate Guide to Networking

presented by
Bethann Gilson

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THE INTROVERT'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Most people don't think that networking and introverts go together. The majority of introverts do not truly understand what being an introvert is and how it impacts their lives. If you're an introvert who thinks that you're stuck where you are in your career because you can't effectively network, keep reading. Or if you're an introvert who wants to build a strong web of connections, keep reading. This book will kill some of the myths about introverts and provide some tips and strategies on how to be a networking pro; however, you choose to interact with others.

Introvert Myths

Most people think of introverts as shy, awkward individuals who cannot communicate with the world around them. People believe introverts hide in the corners at parties and struggle to open their mouths and get words out when in a conversation with others. This belief could not be further from the truth. Introverts are simply people who can be comfortably quiet.

Unlike extroverts who become more energized by large crowds, introverts are people who need time and space to be alone to recharge their energy. An introvert might choose to read instead of going to a party on the weekend. They might enjoy taking a long walk or watching a movie alone instead of hanging out with people from work during their time off. Neither of these ways of re-energizing is right or wrong – they are perfect for each individual.

It is my opinion that the traits which introverts seem to share—feeling like an outsider, being an observer, curiosity about the stories and situations of others— are great strengths when it comes to networking. Recently I read a study that said, "An introvert who is silent in a group may be quite engaged—taking in what is said, thinking about it, waiting for a turn to speak." I think this ability to observe and assess

works in our favor. It doesn't matter if you're shy, humble, self- effacing, insecure, or hate the stereotype of networking; I want to encourage you to make the most of your personal style and build your brain trust—to start from where you are. I believe that introverts can build strong connections because of some distinctive characteristics we share.

Networking is all about meeting new people and talking with them in meaningful ways. It means building mutually-beneficial relationships with these new people after the networking event is over.

Can introverts do all that? Of course! And they can do it like a pro as long as they work with their energy instead of against it.

Use these tips to start mastering networking as an introvert.

Allow Time for Yourself

Since you recharge best alone while pursuing quiet activities, be sure to give yourself alone time both before and after the event. Don't schedule other social activities that might be a drain on energy before you network. Even if you have to cancel plans that you might enjoy, it's essential to be at your peak energy when going into a networking situation. When the event is over, give yourself time to re-energize in much the same way. It may mean going home instead of going out for drinks afterward. Honor your energy, and you'll end up enjoying networking much more.

Give Yourself Reasonable Goals

Even energized, an introvert might have difficulty meeting an entire room of people. Being in a large group can be draining and intimidating to an introvert. Before you arrive at the event, set a goal you can easily keep. Plan to talk to only a few people, especially since you're more likely to get into more in-depth conversations with these individuals (one of the perks of being an introvert). If you can, choose those

that will be most beneficial to meet before you even get there. That way, you'll have a plan, and you can focus on the people you want to meet from the start. Having a plan will help you relax into the experience and come off more natural.

Let Someone Else Introduce You

Meeting new people is intimidating to anyone, but introverts might need that extra nudge. Having someone introduce you to the people you need to meet can take a lot of the pressure off. If you don't know anyone at the networking event, go to the event organizer and ask them to make the introduction on your behalf.

Spend More Time Listening

Everyone loves an audience. Introverts, usually quieter by nature, make for especially good listeners. Learn how to become an *engaged* listener. Keep your attention entirely on the person you're talking to. Ask questions. Offer your opinions only when asked, or when the other person has finished speaking. Why is this important? When someone feels listened to, they immediately have a better opinion of the one doing the listening. Being an engaged listener makes you memorable in a good way. At the same time, this kind of conversation allows for more depth, building a stronger relationship right at the start.

Plan How to Begin

Starting a conversation can be tricky. To keep from resorting to a mundane conversation about the weather or the event itself, have some rehearsed conversation starters ready to go. Want a pro-tip? Do a little research on the other attendees you want to meet and design conversational starters towards their interests. Try asking about pet projects or things you know they are working on now. Most people love talking about themselves. With the right question, you'll very easily get the conversation going.

Don't Expect Perfection

No one is great at networking the first time out. Even extroverts will find themselves overwhelmed from time to time. Awkward encounters will happen. If things go badly, chalk it up to a learning experience and move on. If things go especially badly, then give yourself a break. Get a drink or step outside to get a breath of fresh air before moving on to the next person. If you find yourself wanting to bolt for home, then make a deal with yourself. Set a time limit, giving it another 15 – 20 minutes before racing for the door. Who knows, you might find yourself wanting to stay after all.

Lose the Cell Phone

There's nothing worse than trying to talk to someone who's staring at their screen. Make a point to keep your cell phone pocketed during the event. Set up some ground rules before the function. These rules might include checking your phone only once every half hour or moving into a quiet area before checking it. One sure way to make a bad impression is looking like you've got other, more important things to be doing.

Ignore the Mental Mindgames

Chances are you've already got a lot of preconceived notions about yourself and networking based on previous experience. Ignore everything you've been telling yourself about how you can't talk to people. Eliminate any inner voice trying to remind you of your so-called limitations. Tell yourself firmly that none of those messages are correct. Even if some of them are (for example, you might have had a bad experience in the past), remind yourself that was then, this is now. Just because something happened before, doesn't mean it will happen again.

Pay Attention to Your Physical Health

It's hard enough to manage networking as an introvert. You certainly don't need to make things harder by struggling to maintain your energy levels before you even step through the door. Make a point to eat beforehand and drink plenty of water.

Also, make sure you're well-rested and already at optimal energy when you get there. Dragging in tired or sick is a recipe for disaster, so do whatever you can to make sure you're feeling healthy and strong for the event.

Have a Plan in Place for Afterwards

By the time the event is over, most introverts are ready to head for home for some private time. You need to understand that this is part of your particular process and that emotions of this sort are perfectly sane and natural. Here is where a little planning goes a long way.

The day after a networking event, give yourself time to recharge in your optimal environment. Need time outside? Plan a day in the woods or the garden. Need to fall into a book and be quiet? Then make sure you schedule things so you can get some uninterrupted reading time. Whatever you need to do to recharge, do it.

The trick is to remember to follow up with the people you meet. Don't feel like you have to dive in immediately, though. You can send out messages over the next couple of days, so take it slow. By reminding them of the circumstance of the meeting, and some detail of the conversation, they'll remember you easy enough even if a couple of days have passed. Remember, the key here is to work at a pace that's comfortable for you.

Listening, observing, & being curious are great tools for connecting with people. The best thing about each of them is that you don't have to be the center of attention. The ability to "size people up" is a great gift. We can get a feeling about someone fairly quickly: are they boastful, nervous, clueless? Does being around them bring a sense of calm or chaos, of curiosity, of humor? As introverts being able to understand what you will be able to expect from those you meet is crucial as you build your network.

Being an introvert doesn't mean that you'll never master networking. It means you might need to put a little more thought and planning into what you're doing than an extrovert does. It also means you're going to have to pay closer attention to your energy levels as you network, and that you'll need to be kind to yourself when you find your energy level falling.

Because introverts typically make great listeners, you'll more likely make deeper and longer-lasting connections. If you're an introvert, take heart. You're about to experience some of the best social interactions in your life that will inspire confidence in your unique self.

Thank you for spending your time reading these tips. I hope that you will use a few of them at your next networking event.

In my upcoming course, we will be exploring how we can live more authentically. Look for updates about "How to Live Authentically in a World of Faking It." Join me then, as we take a more in-depth look at the value of networking.

Talk with you again soon!!

Bethann