

Tips for Successful Networking for CAs

An accounting practice and an accounting career are built on relationships. Networking is just another word for building relationships, and good relationships start with communication. This article offers accountants some valuable tips for successful networking.

How can a professional ensure robust networking? In the world of CAs, this is one of the most frequently asked questions, whose answer is sought by most professionals. And why not? In today's era of information and fast-paced globalisation, with skyrocketing expectations from clients, networking for CAs has become a must.

Today's well-informed clients are increasingly looking for a 'one-stop shop' for expertise, experience and efficiency. Effective networking not only enhances the reach of the professionals, but also ensures better services to clients.

Here are seven networking tips for accountants from the best corporate networkers—the leaders who really know how to “work a room” and make an impact at any event.

1. Focus, Focus, Focus

When you first start talking to someone (whether a colleague, an old client, a new prospect, or someone you have just met), concentrate your focus totally on them. Make a deliberate attempt to look only into their eyes. Don't look away, stay “in the moment” with this one person.

2. Be Precise, Be Brief

Long-winded or vague (“I'm not sure why I'm here; I don't know where I'm going; what's happening?") people generally fail at networking. Why? Because everything they do

or don't do suggest that you are not important. If all you do as a CA is to talk to your client without getting to the point, you will have a tired jaw but no respect, and certainly no new business.

In networking, the best perceptions are created by being precise and brief when you meet people. You might need to have a one- or two-sentence standard opener, developed before you go to any client seminar, community meeting, function or conference. And remember, asking questions is great communication.

3. Open Up, Lighten Up

Being too serious about networking can make you less effective. After all, networking is all about people getting to know people. Aren't relationships vital to accounting? By lightening up and becoming more human, you can open up about yourself; perhaps even admitting a lack of understanding of some area. Being ready to laugh or smiling a lot are all encouraging signs for the other person, and let them know you're enjoying the chat. You can do this as a chartered accountant, even if there is a deadly serious agenda for both sides.

4. Set an Agenda

The old expression “set the agenda” is simply a corporate way of saying “go to a function or meeting with a specific goal in mind”. This goal might be to meet a specific person, or to communicate a single message. It could be to collect six business cards before you leave. One successful journalist used to ask political leaders and corporate chiefs about their hobbies, and turn the conversation to this specific interest. It had the benefit of putting these leaders at

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ease and adding a human dimension to the communication.

5. Introduce People

A high profile "Big Firm" accountant sets out to be helpful as part of his networking; at meetings, he will always be introducing valued contacts to each other, so the network grows. This takes some sensitivity (who would they want to meet?) and one needs to take egos into account. Once you become a little more comfortable with networking, you will be more aware of opportunities to introduce people to others who might share an interest. Most of us react well to this. It shows that you genuinely care about that person.

6. Don't Pin People Down

Functions such as community gatherings, luncheons, seminars and conferences are

not occasions for the hard-sell. If you believe networking equates to "making a sale", think again. Networking is about making a contact, and ultimately a friend.

7. Always Follow Up

A few days after the event, send a note to everyone you met (that's why you'll need to collect those business cards). If you promised to find something out for a person, make that phone call and keep your promise. Keep your contacts going, invite them to a seminar or to lunch, treat the networking occasion as just the beginning.

If you are nervous before going to a public gathering or meeting, you will find that going along with a plan ("I will introduce myself and exchange business cards with three new people") can help you relax and make you a better networker. □

For the Kind Attention of All Members of the Chartered Accountants Benevolent Fund

No.CABF/AGM/46/2006

11 August 2006

This is to inform you that as required under Rule 28 of the Chartered Accountants Benevolent Fund Rules and Regulations the 46th Annual General Meeting of the Fund will be held at 5.00 P.M. on 19 September 2006 at the office of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Indraprastha Marg, New Delhi. In compliance with Rule 29 of the said Rules and Regulation, agenda for the meeting together with the report of the Managing Committee and statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2006 will be placed on the table at the time of meeting.

Note: I wish to add that under Rule 38 of

the said Rules and Regulation no member is entitled to any fee or travelling expenses or other allowances for attending the meeting, whether annual or special.

You are requested to make it convenient to attend the meeting.

Sd/-
(S.C.Vasudeva)
Member-Secretary

(Details of Agenda, Report of Managing Committee and Financial Statement, are available on the Institute's web site at www.icai.org)