

Yes – you will have to sometimes talk to people you don't know!

Your best place to start is the trusty **5 P principle** – **Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance**. And the other key P is Practice, Practice, Practice.

1. Prepare an Introduction of yourself

Be prepared. Fail to plan and you plan to fail.

You can prepare a couple of options of how you will introduce yourself. Use the 'Elevator' Pitch template. Be sure to use your full name – it's one of your key assets so make the most of it.

2. Survey the room

If you know someone attending the same event, you could arrange to meet them on arrival – that's give you a 'comfort zone' from which to launch. The challenge of course is to not stay talking to that same person for the entire event. That's not why you are there.

If one or other of you knows somebody else in attendance then head over and join the conversation, and be sure to introduce the unknown person. This extends your network and helps build your confidence.

When you arrive take the time to look around the room – this also is part of your preparation to make a mental plan on how you may interact at the event.

3. Set yourself a target

A networking / business / professional event is not a social gathering – you are there to achieve something. It may be simply to meet some new people, as well as listen and learn if a presentation.

Start small – set yourself the target to introduce yourself to two new people at each event. Be open to meeting new people.

Basic script example for you to assist with continuing the conversation once introduced

- Wendy – great to meet you. What role are you in with ? organisation? What does your role involve?
- That sounds interesting
- Do you come to these events often?

If you need to exit a conversation – it's been great to meet you Wendy, I am just going to head over and check out the nibbles ,or get another drink, find a seat for the presentation.

4. Be a good listener

Tune in to what people are saying. It provides the cues for you to continue the conversation. Be curious and ask questions. Provide appropriate responses to show you are interested. Be positive. Be mindful what you share – perhaps not the place for your entire life story.

5. Seek out opportunities

Check out the local business and professional events. Join your local Chamber of Commerce or Tourism body – you will then be on the mailing list. Commit to attending to build your networking skills.

PRACTICE | PRACTICE | PRACTICE