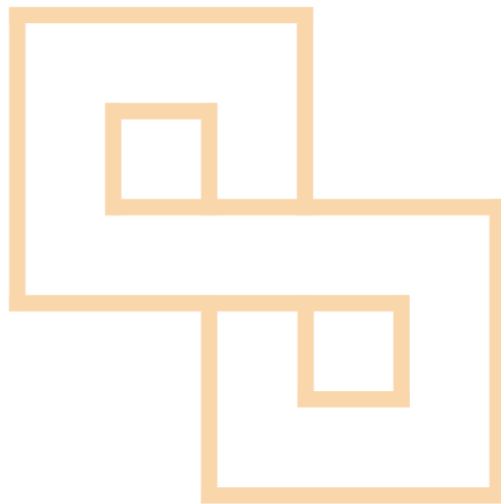


CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE

How to Network With Anyone



**7 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR
BETTER NETWORKING**

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WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT NETWORKING?

The definition of “networking” by Oxford Languages is: “The action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts.”

In my opinion, this is a good definition of what networking is. The thing I notice when people talk about it is that networking is only used in business. But is it really just a business thing?

Once I had a chat with a friend of mine. She is a beautiful woman with red hair (sometimes other colors too), fit, healthy, and full of energy and positivity. And most of the time we meet, she had just ended a relationship, was entering one, or had a casual relationship with someone. All fine with that if she wouldn't be complaining about how she wants to find THE ONE. So, one afternoon we were just having some ice cream in a lounge when I asked her how her love life was. As usual, nothing was different.

Most of the time I keep my criticism to myself, but this time I wanted to help her a bit. So, I asked her: *“And where are you meeting these people? Where are you looking for the right one?”*

“In the bars, nightclubs... why?” she answered a bit surprised.

“Before I answer your why, let me ask you this. What kind of person do you want him to be?”

“Hmm... I want him to be tall, fit, maybe run his own business. I want him to love dogs and to be respectful. I want him to be funny and full of energy. But I also want him to be serious about the relationship and maybe even see himself as a father. Why?”

“And do you think you will find such a person in a nightclub at 3 am, partying hard?” I asked.

“And where else should I meet new people?” she replied, starting to feel desperate.

“I don't know, you tell me. Imagine this guy you want to find. What would he be doing in his spare time? Where would he go?”

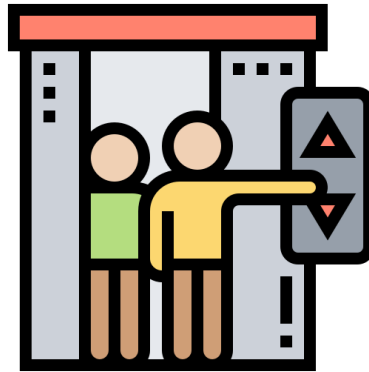
“Probably he would go to a nicer lounge like this one. Or to golf. Or maybe be in the company of some other similar people. At a lecture for self-growth.”

“So why aren't you there? Why aren't YOU around this kind of people more? When you are looking for a new customer, don't you think of where you could find them? Don't you make a plan on how to get more prospects? Why does dating have to be any different?”

I must say this came to me just then. Do you know that feeling when you are teaching someone something that you just acknowledged at that same moment? I was amazed by myself. Comparing dating to business. But that IS networking too.

I think after that time she changed her gym to a better one and started going to parks. Almost 2 years later she's still dating the same person, being the happiest she ever was, and spending her free time with the person SHE decided she wanted. To me, all this is networking. So why do we use it only for business? And why don't we choose the people we want in our social or business group? It doesn't matter whether you want to do business, find the right partner, build a house, start a new project, have fun free time, or do whatever you like to do with someone else, networking will help you do that much better and be happier. So if you want to learn how to get better results through networking, read ahead. You will discover that the skills you need are in your control.

ELEVATOR PITCH



You've just come to a business event ready to find new potential business partners. What do you do? Do you go to the bar and ask for a drink first? Do you go to the buffet and grab some food? Do you seek out familiar faces just to feel more comfortable with strangers? Or do you grab the first person by the shoulder and present yourself?

I am asking you these questions because I have tried all of these things and many more. I still remember my first real networking event. It was a disaster. It happened on Manhattan, New York, in one of the skyscrapers. My friend and business partner and I flew to the States in hopes of finding ourselves the best business partners for our multi-level marketing opportunity. Eager to meet as many people as possible, we checked out every possible way for faster networking. It was the year 2013, and LinkedIn was still way behind other social media. So we had to Google our way to find a website with various events happening all over the world. And we were lucky because there were not many events outside New York at the time. So we found the first possible opportunity and RSVP'd. Taking the metro to the venue, we discussed how we would explain what we do to the crowd. Oh, we had big plans for them! We will show them what we have, and they will LOVE IT! At least that is what we thought.

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he doors of the elevator opened, and we entered wanting to go up. Suddenly two nice guys ran into the elevator with us, catching it at the last moment. I would say that was our luckiest run-in ever. The moment the doors closed, one of them turned to us and asked: *"You going to the networking?"* *"Sure we are!"* we said enthusiastically. Wow, amazing! It already started. We will get our first business cards right now. Here in the elevator. And we will be rich... *"So what is your elevator pitch?"* we hear all of a sudden. *"What is what?"* I asked. *"Your elevator pitch? What's your 20 seconds presentation?"* *"Ahem...we...we don't have one."* They giggled, looked at us, and said: *"You should get one soon if you want to get any business cards today."*

Can you imagine how shameful we felt? It was like the whole world crumbled on us. But we came here. Spent over \$3000 just to come to the US and another few bucks to be at the event. We can't just surrender. As soon as we got into the room, we took a turn right to an empty corner and started brainstorming. We were really lucky to have met those two guys. Otherwise, the whole night would be a total fiasco.

Sharing this story, some might think we lacked preparation. And they would be right. Amongst other things, this was our first but not the worst mistake. So, before we dive into the 7 key principles for networking with anyone, we have to touch on the part of preparation. This per se is not a principle, but it will make everything else much easier and more effective.

PREPARATION

If you would want to play basketball, at least what you would need to have is another player, a ball, and a hoop. If you would want to have a better experience, you would need another 8 players, a field with all the lines drawn, another hoop, and probably a referee. Now you could have a nice match, but could you remember who you are playing with without proper shirts? And I'm guessing you prefer to run and jump with some basketball shoes signed by a famous player. Would that be enough for the best possible experience? Probably it would help if you'd agreed on the time and goal of the game, right? The more you prepare, the better your experience will be. And since you know what your goal is, you can use all the tools you have to win the game in the time frame you have available.

The same goes for networking or any other activity in your life. You always need to make a plan, prepare your tools, and visualize your goal. Otherwise, you'd start walking toward nowhere and then complain why you didn't arrive at the desired destination. But what are the things you can prepare for a networking event? Or just in case you meet someone on the streets or in a café?

Without going into details about your outfit and your looks, which I firmly believe are just a tool to make YOU feel more comfortable, you need to set a clear goal on what you want to achieve if you meet someone. It can be anything you want. You can have them sign up for your newsletter. It can be that you want to bring them to a business meeting in your office. Maybe you want to get to know a person better to see if she or he could become your partner in any way you want. Or maybe you just want to get noticed and leave your business card. All these goals are good as long as you have one. Not having a goal would mean being uncomfortable when you meet someone. And you don't want to feel that, right?

When you have a goal, you need to devise a plan of action. How will you meet this goal of yours? What will you tell the person? What will you ask? What will you give? Where will you point them next? Where will you even meet this person in the first place? It doesn't really matter if you are looking for business partners, friends, or lifetime partners. You can always make a plan on where you will meet them. Why do we use personas just for businesses? Maybe you want to get a better boyfriend or girlfriend. That is a legitimate goal. And networking IS kind of speed dating. But why when we are looking for a potential customer, we make ideal personas. We write down their values, goals, wants, likes, dislikes, characteristics of any kind, gender, age, interests, but when we go in search of a date, we just randomly look around, hoping for a miracle? I am only guessing that you wouldn't go to a funeral looking to pitch your product, right? The same goes for any new person you meet. If we have a clear goal, that is already good. But what would help even more would be if we had a clear picture of what our ideal contact would be. If we have that, we can make better use of our time looking for that contact. Why waste our time? Don't look for people where there are none. And don't get me wrong, I love nightclubs too. But when I go to one, I just want to have fun, meet people, and not worry about anything else.

Having this ideal contact is essential, but if we want to get in touch with the right person, we have to also prepare what we will tell them. Here is where the elevator pitch comes in handy. So, what exactly is it? It is the short story about your goal, what you want to get from this person, and what you can give in return. Some say it should be short enough that you can tell it while riding an elevator with a stranger. Others will say it should be a bit longer, about 2 minutes. In my experience, you should have both versions ready. I have found that the people you are pitching to are usually not ready for a longer conversation. So, use this longer pitch when you really have someone hooked up. In the beginning, you should just make them feel comfortable listening to you.

7 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR BETTER NETWORKING

PRINCIPLE N°1: ACCEPTING EVERYONE



Networking isn't just about meeting people who you think are beneficial to your immediate goals. It's about accepting and valuing everyone you meet. Why? Because you never know who might turn out to be a valuable connection in the future. Accepting everyone means being open-minded and approachable.

Every person you meet has their own unique set of experiences, knowledge, and networks. By accepting everyone, you expand your own network exponentially. It's important to remember that today's stranger could be tomorrow's business partner, client, or friend.

When you accept everyone, you also create a positive atmosphere around yourself. People are drawn to those who are welcoming and inclusive. This principle also means not being judgmental. Sometimes, the most unlikely connections can turn out to be the most valuable.

Action Steps:

- Practice active listening. Show genuine interest in what others have to say.
- Avoid making snap judgments about people based on their appearance or initial conversation.
- Keep an open mind and be willing to engage with people from all walks of life.

Real-life Example: I once attended a conference where I met someone who, at first glance, didn't seem relevant to my business interests. However, by engaging in a conversation and showing genuine interest in his work, I learned about a niche market that eventually became a significant part of my business strategy. Had I not accepted and valued him, I would have missed out on that opportunity.

PRINCIPLE N°2: GIVE FAST AND FIRST



One of the most powerful principles in networking is to give before you receive. This principle is about offering value to others without expecting anything in return. When you give first, you create a positive impression and lay the foundation for a strong relationship.

Giving can take many forms. It could be sharing valuable information, offering assistance, making introductions, or providing support. The key is to act quickly and be the first to offer help. This approach not only builds trust but also encourages reciprocity.

When you give fast and first, you demonstrate that you are a person of action and generosity. People remember those who help them and are more likely to return the favor in the future.

Action Steps:

- Look for opportunities to help others, whether it's sharing a useful contact, offering advice, or lending a hand with a project.
- Be proactive in your approach. Don't wait for others to ask for help; offer it willingly.
- Follow through on your promises. If you offer to help someone, make sure you deliver on your commitment.

Real-life Example: At a networking event, I met a startup founder who was struggling to find a good graphic designer. I immediately connected him with a talented designer I knew. This simple act of giving not only helped him but also strengthened my relationship with both parties. Later, the startup founder referred several clients to my business, proving that giving first pays off.

PRINCIPLE N°3: ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN



Effective networking isn't about talking; it's about listening. Asking thoughtful questions and genuinely listening to the answers is crucial for building meaningful connections. When you listen, you show that you care about the other person's perspective and interests.

Listening is more than just hearing words; it involves understanding the emotions and intentions behind them. By asking questions, you encourage others to share more about themselves, which can reveal valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration.

Action Steps:

- Develop a list of open-ended questions that encourage detailed responses. Questions like *"What inspired you to start your business?"* or *"What challenges are you currently facing?"* can lead to deeper conversations.
- Practice active listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding, and providing feedback.
- Avoid interrupting or steering the conversation back to yourself. Let the other person speak and show genuine interest in their story.

Real-life Example:

During a networking lunch, I met a potential client. Instead of pitching my services right away, I asked about his business challenges and listened carefully. This approach helped me understand his needs better and allowed me to tailor my pitch accordingly. By listening first, I was able to build a stronger connection and eventually secure a long-term contract.

PRINCIPLE N°4: DO NOT SELL, CONNECT INSTEAD



What I have encountered mostly on networking events are people who tend to sell you, their idea. Networking is not about making immediate sales; it's about building relationships. When you approach networking with the intention of selling, you risk coming across as pushy and self-centered. Instead, focus on connecting with people on a personal level.

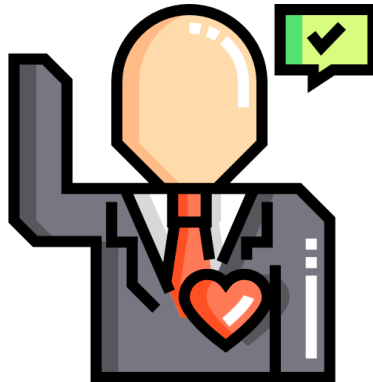
Building genuine connections involves understanding the other person's needs, interests, and goals. By prioritizing relationships over sales, you create a network of people who trust and support you. Sales and business opportunities will naturally follow when you have strong connections.

Action Steps:

- Focus on building rapport and trust. Share stories, find common interests, and show empathy.
- Avoid pushing your products or services right away. Instead, offer insights and solutions that address the other person's needs.
- Be patient. Building meaningful relationships takes time, but the payoff is worth the investment.

Real-life Example: At a trade show, I met a potential client. Instead of diving into a sales pitch, I spent time learning about his company and the challenges he faced. Over the next few months, we kept in touch, sharing industry news and insights. Eventually, when he needed services that my company offered, he reached out to me because of the trust and connection we had built.

PRINCIPLE N°5: BE SINCERE, BE TRUE



Authenticity is key in networking. People are naturally drawn to those who are genuine and sincere. When you are true to yourself, you attract others who appreciate your honesty and integrity. Being sincere means being honest about your intentions and capabilities. It's about showing your true self and not pretending to be someone you're not. This authenticity helps build trust and long-lasting relationships.

Action Steps:

- Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Don't overpromise or exaggerate your capabilities.
- Share your true intentions and goals. Let others know what you're looking for and how you can help them.
- Be transparent in your communications. Honesty and openness go a long way in building trust.

Real-life Example: I once attended a networking event where I met someone who seemed very impressive but later turned out to be exaggerating his achievements. This experience taught me the importance of authenticity. Now, I always make sure to be honest and transparent in my interactions, which has helped me build a strong network of trusted connections.

PRINCIPLE N°6: QUALITY OVER QUANTITY



In networking, the quality of your connections is more important than the quantity. It's better to have a few strong, meaningful relationships than a large number of superficial ones. Focus on building deep connections with people who share your values and can provide mutual support.

Quality connections are built on trust, respect, and mutual benefit. These relationships are more likely to lead to long-term collaborations and opportunities.

Action Steps:

- Prioritize building relationships with people who share your interests and values.
- Invest time in nurturing your connections. Regularly check in, offer help, and stay in touch.
- Don't spread yourself too thin. Focus on a few key connections and work on strengthening those relationships.

Real-life Example: I used to believe that having a large network was the key to success. However, I soon realized that many of my connections were superficial and didn't lead to meaningful opportunities. By focusing on quality over quantity, I developed a smaller but stronger network that has provided invaluable support and opportunities over the years.

PRINCIPLE N°7: FOLLOW UP



Following up is an essential part of networking. A connection made is only the beginning; maintaining and nurturing that connection is where the real value lies. Follow up after initial meetings to keep the relationship alive and show that you value the connection. Effective follow-up involves regular communication and providing value to the other person. It's about staying in touch and continuing to build the relationship over time.

Action Steps:

- Send a follow-up message within 24 hours of meeting someone. Thank them for their time and express your interest in staying connected.
- Schedule regular check-ins. This could be through emails, phone calls, or in-person meetings.
- Share relevant information or opportunities that might interest the other person. This shows that you're thinking about them and value the connection.

Real-life Example: After meeting a potential partner at a conference, I followed up with a personalized email the next day, thanking them for their time and suggesting a coffee meeting to discuss potential collaboration. This simple act of follow-up led to a productive meeting and eventually a successful partnership.

BE DIFFERENT

In a world where everyone is trying to network, standing out is crucial. Being different doesn't mean being outrageous or attention-seeking; it means being authentic and memorable in a way that reflects your true self.

Differentiate yourself by showcasing your unique strengths, stories, and perspectives. When you are memorable, people are more likely to remember you and reach out when opportunities arise.

Action Steps:

- Identify what makes you unique and highlight those qualities in your interactions.
- Use personal stories and experiences to connect with others on a deeper level.
- Be confident in your individuality. Don't be afraid to be different and stand out from the crowd.

Real-life Example: At a networking event, instead of the usual business card exchange, I handed out small, personalized notebooks with my contact details. This unique approach made me memorable and sparked conversations, leading to several valuable connections.

By applying these principles and embracing the mindset of genuine connection, you can effectively network with anyone, creating meaningful relationships that benefit both your personal and professional life.

This booklet is a free guide on how to network and connect with people better. It should not be sold, but it can be shared. The owner and author is Rok Slama (www.rokslama.com).

If you wish to connect with me, visit my website and schedule a free call with me or write me an e-mail. It will be a pleasure to meet someone new.