

Improve Your Networking Success at Industry Events

Janet Falk writes: At the start of the new year, your business development activities probably include a plan to attend more industry and professional membership networking events to meet more referral sources and potential clients.

By Janet Falk | January 05, 2018

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At the start of the new year, your business development activities probably include a plan to attend more industry and professional membership networking events to meet more referral sources and potential clients.

Most discussions of networking review how to act at the event and conduct follow-up afterwards. With the following pre-event marketing approach, you will reach out to the movers and shakers of the host organization *in advance of the event*, effectively building a welcoming committee. Then, you will use these new connections to work the room and meet potential referral sources who will, in the future, trust you as a fellow member and introduce you to new clients. Here's how:

Once you have registered for the networking event, visit the website of the host organization. Create a list of the officers, board members and committee chairs and their email addresses.

A week before the event, write an introductory email to each leader with the subject line: "Will you attend the Networking Cocktail on February 12?" (If the email address is not available, you can contact the person with a message on LinkedIn.) Mention briefly that you are an attorney and note your work with a related business, along these lines:

Morgan,

Your name came to my attention as an officer/committee chair of the Host Organization. I am an attorney who focuses on transactions/litigation in the _____ industry. Recently, I advised Relevant Company on various issues in Specific Area of Mutual Interest. I wish to learn more about the Host Organization and how, if I become a member, I might get involved in your activities. Perhaps we can chat at the Event, where I'm excited to meet you and your colleagues.

Regards,

Your Name

Law firm website

The leaders of the organization will be thrilled to receive your note. At least half of them will eagerly write back to you with a warm welcome. Why? Every professional membership group or industry organization needs to bring in new members. People with technical knowledge, such as attorneys, are especially prized as potential resources for their current members. Your email demonstrates that you are a professional worth welcoming into the organization. It establishes mutual interests and a basis to build a future relationship.

Now that the leaders have replied, return their notes warmly. Indicate that you will wear a distinctive article of clothing so it will be easy for you to spot one another in a crowded room. Perhaps a man wears a green tie and a woman wears a red jacket. Through this email exchange, you transform the officer of the group into a member of your *Welcoming Committee*; this person is now prepared to look for you at the event and will introduce you to their peers.

On the day of the event, review the list of the people you contacted and peruse their LinkedIn profiles. Take notes on all areas of mutual interest, to ensure a substantive conversation. This list of annotated names is your game plan.

When you arrive, ask the person at the registration desk to identify one or two of the people on your list. When speaking with them, start by asking about the industry or professional organization itself. Learn what they most enjoy about the group. Ask why they became a member. Discover how they contribute to the group's success. Let them promote the organization and recruit you. Only discuss yourself and your practice in passing. As the conversation develops, and you exchange business cards, ask to be introduced to the leaders you contacted. Your new connection will gladly bring you to meet the other officers.

This introduction to their peer will enhance the reputation of your new contact in the other's eyes. Imagine the group's president thinking, "That Anna, she's on the ball, getting us new members!" Checking the names on your list, endeavor to meet as many of the officers and committee chairs as possible.

After the event, email a follow-up note and a custom LinkedIn connection request. Write what a pleasure it was to meet in person after your email correspondence. Mention how much you enjoyed learning about the organization. Did you join? Then, tell these contacts they persuaded you to become a member. Say that you look forward to speaking with them again soon or continuing your conversation at a future event.

If there was someone on the list whom you did not meet, because they were talking with others or did not attend, you can still write to them. Say that you are a new member and you wish to get involved in the group. Invite them to meet for coffee and see what develops.

Implementing this pre-event marketing campaign makes *you* the focus of attention among the organization's movers and shakers. Your interests demonstrably align with theirs. You all embrace an agenda of the benefits of membership and the group's future activities. Thanks to that shared purpose, you enhance your networking success and plant seeds for plentiful referrals.

Janet Falk is the head of Falk Communications and Research in New York. She provides media relations and marketing communications services to law firms and consultants. She may be reached at 212-677-5770 or email at janet@janetfalk.com.

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