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7 Key Habits of Super Networkers

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The ability to network successfully can be one of the greatest assets in business. It allows some people to find incredible opportunities, while others just watch from the sidelines.

Effective networking isn't a result of luck -- it requires hard work and persistence. What does it take to be a super networker? Here are seven of the most important habits to develop:

1. Ask insightful questions.

Before attending networking events, get the names of the people who are expected to attend and search social media sites like LinkedIn to figure out which topics they're probably most interested in. For people who are already in your network, don't assume you know everything they're up to. Find out what they're currently working on -- or perhaps struggling with. This attention to detail can go a long way at your next one-on-one lunch or dinner meeting.

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2. Add value.

One of the most powerful networking practices is to provide immediate value to a new connection. This means the moment you identify a way to help someone, take action. If, for instance, you know someone in your network who can help a new connection with a problem, drop what you're doing and introduce the two individuals.

3. Learn their 'story.'

Ask successful entrepreneurs to tell you how they got where they are. Most people think of this as an exercise in rapport building, but hearing these stories can tell you a lot about a person's approach to business. The more you understand your networking partner's mentality, the better you can add and extract value from your relationship.

For example, some entrepreneurs pride themselves on working 16-hour days and doing whatever it takes, while others focus on being strategic and waiting for the right opportunities to open up. These are clues that can not only allow you to see what people value, but also what working with them might be like.

4. Share a memorable fact.

When someone asks, "What do you do?" don't give a canned elevator speech about your company and career. Mention something personal that defines who you really are. Maybe you have a passion for playing an instrument or an obsession with collecting antiques. These are also "things you do," so make it a point to share them. Such personal details can help lighten the mood and get people talking.

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5. Keep a list.

What's your routine after attending a networking event or meal? If your answer is, "I go home," you're probably going to miss out on opportunities. Write down important topics that came up at the event. This habit can help prevent opportunities from falling through the cracks and give you something to reference in conversation the next time you meet. You can also develop a reputation as someone who's on top of things.

6. Make small promises and keep them.

No matter how small a promise you make -- such as sending an email or returning a phone call -- delivering on that promise reflects on your character. By following through on your word, you start building a reputation for trustworthiness, which is exactly how every great networker wants to be perceived.

7. Reward your 'power' contacts.

Keep a list of your top five to 10 networking partners and do something each week to add value to one person's life or business. You might send them a book or set up a lunch to introduce them to one of your other contacts. This habit can help you be proactive about staying in touch with your most powerful contacts. Just as with fitness or investing, the most successful people are the ones who choose to be consistent in their actions.

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