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# Networking introductions: Strategies for success

Christine Comaford-Lynch, leadership and culture coach, points out “Networking is marketing. Marketing yourself, marketing your uniqueness, marketing what you stand for. The challenge is in finding a comfortable way to introduce yourself to the people who matter when you’re at a professional conference, association mixer or a social event where other professionals will be. The key? To be brief, but also leave enough information that you pique the listener’s interest.”

“First impressions, lasting impact” should be the key concept of your game plan. How can you do that, you ask? Be prepared. Be prepared to introduce yourself, as well as others. Let’s take a look at a few strategies that should lead you down the path to success in networking introductions.

## Introducing yourself

- Be memorable. When networking, you’ll have a few precious moments, so make the most of your time to introduce yourself in a manner that generates conversation.

- Identify your audience. Is it a networking event, conference, company social event or some type of professional mixer?

- Consider the who, what and how. Who is your target market? What problem(s) do you solve? How do you add value? What are your key competencies in the sense of how others benefit from your skillset/what you do?

- Prepare to present. Script what you’re going to say, and tell your story with the passion you feel about what you do. Here’s an example of one I recently reviewed: “Hi, I’m Tom Elliott, graphic designer with Successful Images, and I design exceptionally gorgeous business cards that help business owners beam with delight every time they hand out a business card that promotes their business.” When asked what I do, my simple spiel is, “I’m Shirley White, a career strategist who loves providing my clients with all the tools they need to achieve a winning edge in their career progress.” If time allows, and if appropriate, I go on to share what those “tools” encompass. A major key in saying whatever you decide to say is to be natural; avoid sounding rehearsed.

## Introducing others

- Add introductory information. Whenever possible, add a little information to go with a name. That will give others a springboard for conversation. For example, “Ms. Jones, this is Dr. Facey, vice president of marketing. Ms. Jones is the president and CEO of ABC Co.” If sitting, stand when being introduced. This shows consideration and respect.

- Remember names. To help you remember a person’s name, repeat it as soon as you are introduced, and practice saying the name several times during the conversation. On the flip side of the coin, what if you are unable to remember someone’s name whom you have

met before? In those situations, you can simply say in a sincere tone of voice, “I’m so sorry, but I need just a little help; could you please refresh my memory?” I’ll bet many of you have your own strategy for handling that situation.

- Have a firm handshake. The handshake is important. It is the usual greeting for both men and women. Handshakes are your first way of connecting with a person before you ever say a word. Remember, however, a limp, moist handshake or, on the other hand, a bone-crushing handshake can slam the door on an enthusiastic response. A firm grasp is the key. Special note: When a man and woman are being introduced, ideally, their hands should come together simultaneously. Gentlemen, times have changed a bit. You do not need to wait for the woman to offer her hand first. And ladies, some men are unaware of this change in etiquette, so be ready to offer your hand.

Though many of you may have a bit of difficulty introducing yourself as well as other people to one another, with practice, confidence and a sense of social interaction, you too can master the essentials of networking introductions.

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