

NAIL THAT NETWORKING

Let's be honest, networking can feel awkward as hell. You walk into a room and suddenly become aware of everything.

Where to stand. Who to talk to. What to say. Your stomach flips. Your palms are sweaty. You're hoping someone smiles at you first.

That feeling is more common than you think.

In business, networking is one of the most powerful tools you have. A huge percentage of opportunities, introductions and referrals come from conversations and relationships, not adverts or campaigns.

But here's the problem. Too many people walk into the wrong rooms, have poor experiences, and decide networking just isn't for them.

That's where they miss out. Because when it's done right, networking can change everything. It builds confidence. Raises your profile. Opens doors. Brings in business.

This guide is here to help you approach networking differently. Not as something you have to perform at, but something you can grow into.

You do not need to be the loudest person in the room. You do not need the perfect pitch. You do not need to know everyone. You just need to start.

Let's nail that networking.

A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of a large teal circle partially overlapping a smaller bright green circle, with a small pink circle above the green one.

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NETWORKING GUIDE

01 Before You Arrive

02 Choosing Your Events

03 Starting Conversations

04 Body Language

05 Your Perfect Pitch

06 Networking Online

07 Follow-Up That Works

08 Mindset and Confidence

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01 BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Preparation is your secret weapon. The more prepared you are, the less your nerves get to run the show.

Research the event

Check the agenda, speaker list and organiser. What's the format; roundtable, pitches or open networking?

Know who's attending

Many events share an attendee list. Identify 3 to 5 people you'd love to speak to and look them up beforehand.

Connect on LinkedIn first

Send a short message: 'I see we're both attending [event]; I look forward to meeting you there!'

Set a clear goal

Decide what success looks like. Speak to 3 new people? Find a collaborator? Get a follow-up meeting booked?

Sort the logistics

Know where you're going, where to park and what time doors open. Arriving flustered destroys confidence.

Plan your outfit

Wear something you feel great in, ideally with a talking point. Dressing well is part of your brand.

Bring business cards or a QR code

Have your contact details ready to share. A digital QR code linking to your LinkedIn works brilliantly.

Prepare your conversation starters

Have 2 to 3 genuine questions ready. What brought them here? What are they working on right now?

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02 CHOOSING YOUR EVENTS

Not every room is your room and that's fine.

What suits YOU?

- Morning, day or evening?
- Drinks or breakfast?
- Small intimate or crowd?
- Industry-specific or mixed?
- Online or in person?
- Regular or one-off?

Who's in the room?

- Your ideal clients or peers?
- Startups or established?
- Local or national reach?
- Sector: eg creative, finance?
- Jeans or suits culture?
- Well-organised and well promoted?

What's the format?

- Open networking?
- Structured intros or speed rounds?
- Speaker and Q&A format?
- Facilitated small groups?
- Learning element?
- Pitch or showcase opportunity?

You may need to kiss a lot of frogs!

Attend different events to find the rooms that feel right for you. That's not wasted time; that's research.

ASK THE ORGANISER BEFORE YOU BOOK

- Will you share the attendee list in advance?
- What's the format; open or structured?
- Are there opportunities to speak or present?
- How many people typically attend?
- Is there a dress code or culture I should know?
- Will there be follow-up comms or a community group?

TYPES OF NETWORKING EVENTS

Here are some examples - there are many more. Find your tribe.

Breakfast Meetings

Early starters;
high energy

Evening Drinks

Relaxed;
social vibe

Conference

Big reach;
key speakers

Netwalking

Relaxed,
wellbeing

Online

Flexible;
global reach

Awards

Celebratory;
ambitious crowd

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03 STARTING A CONVERSATION

Break the ice without breaking a sweat.

CONVERSATION STARTERS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

For someone standing alone

"Is this your first time here?"

"Have you been to this group before?"

"What brought you along today?"

To break into a group

"Do you mind if I join you?"

"I don't want to interrupt, but..."

"I couldn't help but hear you mention..."

When you know someone by reputation

"I've heard great things about your work in..."

"We have a mutual connection in [Name]..."

"I saw your talk or post about..."

Universal conversation starters

"What's keeping you busy at the moment?"

"What are you hoping to get from today?"

"What does your business focus on?"

04 BODY LANGUAGE



SMILE GENUINELY
Warmth is magnetic. A real smile signals you're approachable.



EYE CONTACT
Hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Look away naturally, not downward.



OPEN POSTURE
Arms uncrossed; body turned toward the person you're with.



PHONE AWAY
Put it on silent. Nothing says 'I'm not interested' like scrolling.



LEAN IN SLIGHTLY
Shows engagement. Nod as they speak; listen to understand.



HANDSHAKE OR HELLO
Extend your hand confidently; it signals equality and respect.

GRACEFUL EXITS; how to move on without being rude

"It's been so lovely chatting; I mustn't monopolise your time!"
"I need to catch [name] before they leave; let's connect on LinkedIn."

"I'll let you get back to mingling; it was great to meet you." "Shall we swap details and grab a coffee sometime?"

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05 YOUR PERFECT PITCH

THE PITCH STRUCTURE

Keep to 60 seconds or less

1

FULL NAME AND BUSINESS

Start by introducing yourself clearly; name and company.

e.g. "I'm [Name] from [Business]; I specialise in..."

2

WHAT I DO

The simplest possible explanation of your offer; one sentence.

e.g. "I run a branding studio for female-led businesses."

3

I HELP...

Paint a picture of who you serve. Be specific; speak to your ideal client.

e.g. "I help ambitious women scale their first business."

4

SO THAT... (what's in it for them)

This is the magic line. Connect your work to a real result or transformation.

e.g. "So that they can grow confidently without burning out."

5

YOUR CALL TO ACTION

Be clear about what you want. A meeting? A referral? A follow-up?

e.g. "I'd love to connect after today; shall we swap details?"

6

REPEAT YOUR NAME AND ASK

Closeby restating your name and making a direct, confident ask.

e.g. "I'm [Name]; what is it that you do?"

PITCHPOWER TIPS

Change it up

Use different hooks for different rooms. Don't recite the same script to the same crowd.

Know your audience

Research who's in the room. Tailor your language; technical with tech people, plain English with everyone else.

Practise out loud

Saying it in your head isn't the same. Record yourself on your phone once a week.

Time yourself

60 seconds maximum. Less is more. Leave space for them to respond.

Be human

The best pitches feel like conversation, not performance. Smile, breathe and pause.

End with a question

Flip the spotlight back to them. It shows confidence and genuine curiosity.

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06 NETWORKING ONLINE

FIND WHERE YOUR TRIBE ARE HANGING OUT

Different founders thrive on different platforms. The best platform is the one where your ideal clients and collaborators are already spending time. Show up consistently where it matters for YOU.

LINKEDIN

- Profile is your first handshake; make it human.
- Post insights, wins and behind-the-scenes; aim for 2 to 3 times weekly.
- Comment with substance; it's networking in public.
- Personalise every connection request; never send the default.
- Video gets 5x more engagement; show your face.

INSTAGRAM

- Visual storytelling; ideal for product, lifestyle and personal brands.
- Stories and Reels build trust quickly; show the real you.
- DMs are powerful; engage genuinely before you pitch.
- Use niche hashtags to be found by your ideal community.
- Collaborate with other founders via Lives and joint posts.

COPY-PASTE CONNECTION MESSAGE TEMPLATES

After meeting at an event

"Hi [Name], it was great to meet you at [Event] today. I really enjoyed our conversation about [topic]. I'd love to stay connected!"

Asking for a virtual coffee

"Hi [Name], I'd love to find out more about what you're working on. Would you be open to a 20-minute virtual coffee?"

Cold outreach; you admire their work

"Hi [Name], I've been following your work on [topic] for a while and really value your perspective. I'd love to connect."

Following up after a shared event

"Hi [Name], I noticed we were both at [Event]. I'd have loved to chat! Would you be open to connecting and perhaps a call?"

ONLINE COMMUNITIES WORTH JOINING

LinkedIn Groups

Find niche groups in your sector. Contribute before you promote.

Slack Communities

Many industries have active Slack workspaces. Search your niche.

Facebook Groups

Still active for small business and women in business communities.

Podcast Networking

Reach out to guests you admire; shared listening starts conversations.

Newsletters and Substack

Comment on issues and reply to authors; thoughtful replies get noticed.

Award Communities

EVAS, Everywoman, FSB; award shortlists create instant community.

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07 FOLLOW-UP THAT WORKS

THE FOLLOW-UP TIMELINE

Most people stop at conversation.
The growth happens when you follow it through.

SAME DAY

Connect on LinkedIn with a personalised note
WhatsApp or text if you exchanged numbers

Tag them in any social post about the event
Save their details to your CRM or contacts immediately

WITHIN 48HRS

Send a follow-up email referencing your conversation specifically
Suggest a clear next step: call, coffee or collaboration

Include any resource, intro or link you promised
Add them to your CRM and assign a follow-up task

WITHIN 1 WEEK

Book that meeting if they agreed to one
Introduce them to someone in your network you mentioned

Share a useful article, podcast or resource relevant to them
Follow their social channels and engage with their content

ONGOING

Check in every 4 to 6 weeks; share something useful
Refer business or opportunities their way

Comment meaningfully on their posts
Invite them to your next event or community

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Great to meet you at [EventName]!

Hi [Name],
It was such a pleasure meeting you at [Event] on [Day].

I really enjoyed our conversation about [specific topic; the more personal, the better]. As promised, here is [the resource, intro or link you mentioned].

I'd love to [explore working together, grab a coffee or hop on a quick call]; are you free for 20 minutes in the next couple of weeks?

Looking forward to staying connected!

Warm regards, [Your name]

GOLDEN RULES OF FOLLOW-UP

- Always reference something specific from your conversation
- One clear call to action per message
- Give before you ask; share value first
- Follow up twice if no reply, then let it breathe
- Keep it short; no one reads a novel
- Track your follow-ups using a simple spreadsheet or CRM

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08 MINDSET & CONFIDENCE

REFRAME HOW YOU THINK ABOUT NETWORKING

Networking is not:

hard selling
shoving business cards at strangers
talking at people
trying to impress everyone
pretending to be someone you're not

Networking is:

building trust
showing genuine interest
listening properly
being remembered for the right reasons
starting relationships that can grow over time

10 CONFIDENCE BOOSTS BEFORE AN EVENT

- 1 Do a power pose for 2 minutes before you walk in; it works.
- 2 Remind yourself: everyone in that room feels nervous sometimes.
- 3 Focus on being interested, not interesting.
- 4 Prepare one good question you're genuinely curious about.
- 5 Arrive early; it's easier to meet people as they arrive.
- 6 Give yourself permission to leave after 45 minutes if needed.
- 7 Bring a friend the first time to a new event, then go solo.
- 8 Recall a past conversation that went really well. Hold that feeling.
- 9 Celebrate every connection made; even one is a win.
- 10 Act as if you're the host; welcoming, curious and generous.

"Everything I've built has come from conversations; but more importantly, from listening to people's needs."

Coral Horn, Founder of EVAS, WIB360, SheChain and Pink Link

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