

Introverts Can Sizzle on Networking Job Search

Posted by Devora Zack

To network or not to network? That is the question.

What's at stake? Whatever you most want to accomplish; no biggie.

What if you don't like networking and have no interest? It drains you. It never works. You don't have time. You don't need to. It's phony, self-serving, fake, inauthentic, superficial, conniving, manipulative and useless.

Hold it right there.

In my experience, people who claim to hate networking also believe they are not good at it. But that may not be true. People who hate networking fail at traditional networking by following advice never intended for them in the first place. You have the raw materials to be a stellar networker. You are just following the wrong rules. Standard networking advice fails you, so you assume you fail at networking.

What is networking?

Networking is the art of building and maintaining connections for shared positive outcomes.

That doesn't sound so bad. You can now learn networking methods aligned with the true you.

Networking propels you to your potential. Think of a goal. Perhaps you want to find a job, build your career, win a promotion, make a connection, improve the world, build a reputation, achieve your dream or grow a business.

Networking will further your aim.

As a consultant and author, I have never met a person who did not benefit tremendously from learning how to network on his or her own terms.

The more authentic you are, the more resilient and valuable networks you create. You can network successfully by being real; applying your natural strengths. You can learn to work with, rather than fight against, your lovable self.

The very traits previously labeled as liabilities are now your finest networking assets.

I am an off-the-chart introvert. I have conversations with people in my head that I think actually took place. I need to process ideas before speaking up, or get myself into trouble. The idea of a free-floating happy hour propels me into free-floating anxiety. A cacophony of external stimuli doesn't excite me; it drives me away.

I happen to also be Type A with an exceptionally high energy level. Introverts can be low-key or intense; prefer the back of the room or the spotlight. These traits are not linked to what defines introversion.

Introverts are reflective, focused and self-reliant. Extroverts are verbal, expansive and social. These characteristics lead to three key distinctions:

- Introverts think to talk; extroverts talk to think.
- Introverts drill deep; extroverts stretch wide.
- Introverts energize alone; extroverts energize with others.

These differences lead to many opportunities for introverts to shine in the networking arena. Don't condemn yourself for who you are. Embrace, accept and flaunt your natural style. OK, maybe flaunting is a bit much to ask. Still, it is something to work towards.

M:\Publications\Handouts\Job Search

I have discovered techniques that turn the world of networking for introverts upside down — or shall I say right side up? These insights can transform you into a networking star. You can even enjoy your customized version of networking. Seem impossible? It's not.

Standard networking adages include:

- Promote yourself constantly.
- Never eat alone.
- Increase contacts for increased success.

Until now, networking advice has been written for people of a particular temperament – the very personality style already predisposed to enjoy the prospect of spearing cheese in a room full of bustling strangers.

Research reveals this personality type is 30 to 50 percent of the general population. The rest of us have been left to wander aimlessly through the forbidding terrain of meet-and-greets.

Networking tips just for introverts

These networking techniques were created especially for introverts:

Introverts think to talk.

- Focus on listening rather than self-promotion in initial job search conversations.
- Carefully select what job search events to attend – target those of most interest.
- Prepare specific questions to ask new contacts.
- Prepare and practice aloud responses to frequently asked questions while on a job search.

Introverts drill deep.

- Research the type of job most suited to you and focus your attention there, rather than dissipating your energy casting a wide net.
- Arrange one-on-one meals with select individuals rather than joining large groups.
- Follow up with others based on their interests, proving your immediate value.
- When at a career fair or job conference, leave yourself time between sessions to pace yourself, increasing your focus at the programs you do attend.

Introverts energize alone.

- While at networking events, periodically step away from the group to recharge.
- Volunteer – this gives you a focus, purpose and specific role while networking.
- When arriving at an event, pause to look over attendee name tags, giving you initial alone time and the opportunity to strategize whom to meet.
- Make notations about new contacts on their business cards, increasing your ability to remember details and creating breaks between conversations.

No more stamping out your instincts. Welcome to the world of networking for people who used to hate networking.

Zack, D. (2010). *Introverts Can Sizzle on Networking Job Search*. Retrieved October 8, 2010, from the work buzz Web site: <http://www.theworkbuzz.com/books/networking-for-introverts/?cobrand=msn>