

SPINNING AWWEB

KNOWING THE RIGHT PERSON IN THE RIGHT PLACE IS KEY TO SUCCESS. KIA ABDULLAH SHOWS YOU HOW TO NETWORK EFFECTIVELY

Networking seemed like a recurring theme in our last issue – Tre from *The Apprentice* insisted it was the key to success; Anjula Acharia-Bath of Desi Hits! said it was integral to getting ahead, whilst an Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) study showed that Asian women are underrepresented in 60% of workplaces. As a result, we have gathered some tips, tricks and tools to help you get ahead.

7 STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. SPEAK OUT

Through the ages, the traditional Asian woman has been a shy, retiring and demure one. The brash, confident, assertive, go-getter has often been regarded with disdain but this has been changing. Talk to people everywhere because you never know who will become a useful contact. Don't limit yourself to business networking. Talk to people at parties, in supermarket queues and even in lifts. Don't make imaginary distinctions about people. Never dismiss someone as unimportant or useless.

2. LOOK GOOD

In a business setting, make sure you look immaculate. This doesn't just mean 'wear a suit'; ensure your hair is tidy, nails are clean and shoes are polished! Being smartly dressed will go a long way in attracting people to you.

Be open and approachable. Smile, and don't

be afraid to use your looks; it is our God-given advantage over the darker sex so use it! Of course, make sure you have intelligent conversation to back yourself up – unless you look like Aishwarya Rai, looks alone won't get you very far!

3. SHAKE WELL

A firm handshake is imperative to creating a good first impression. Even the daintiest woman won't get away with a handshake that feels like wilted spinach so make sure you have a firm (not strong!) grip and maintain eye contact. Maintain contact for a moment but don't hold on for more than four seconds either!

Some men, both Asian and non-Asian, may hesitate about shaking an Asian woman's hand so don't be afraid to offer your hand first and put them out of their misery.

4. BE INTERESTING

Prepare a short, snappy and memorable answer to the question 'What do you do?' It's amazing how many of us still struggle with this question or make ourselves sound like a reject from the local Star Trek convention. Keep conversation neutral; don't ask overly personal questions. You can create a better first impression if you deliberately copy the pace and volume of the person you are speaking to.

5. LISTEN!

Be forthcoming but avoid monopolising the conversation. Ask questions that require more than yes/no answers to show that you

are genuinely interested in the person you are talking to.

6. EXCHANGE BUSINESS CARDS

In business meetings, don't pass out your business cards to just anyone as others may think you're a little too eager. Hold back. Get to know others and only then suggest that you exchange details if you feel that there is a rapport.

When given a business card, don't just take it and put it straight into your bag or pocket. Make the person feel valued by studying their card for a few seconds. You might see something that could be a topic of discussion.

7. FOLLOW UP

There is no point making an effort to build a network if you don't maintain relationships. Prepare to stay in touch. Make a point of contacting people whom you met within a day or two, either by phone or email. Sometimes, it is better to go "lo-tech" and make a phone call as it can be more efficient than numerous e-mails.





"Never pitch for business when networking"
says Syed Ahmed

COMMON MISTAKES

EMERGENCY NETWORKING

Build relationships BEFORE you need them. Stay in touch with people you like and respect even if they can't help you immediately. You don't want to go to someone only when you are desperate.

FAKING IT

Unfortunately, being genuine can't be faked but making sure you ask interesting questions and maintain eye contact will go a long way. Listen to what people have to say. Try and counter questions, doubts or scepticism with sound, logical explanations. Don't try to fool around with facts.

MISUSING E-MAIL

The "old boy's" network is alive and well - but so are many others, including the biggest network of all; the internet. Use e-mail and the internet to maintain contacts but keep your messages short and succinct. Few people like reading text on a computer screen. Many people now receive e-mail on cell phones and other portable devices. The tiny screens make reading lengthy messages particularly challenging.

And don't forget, a personal call or face to face meeting never hurt!

STUCK LIKE GLUE

If you lack confidence, try not to glue yourself to the first person you speak to. Whilst they might enjoy your company, they probably have other people they want to speak to. Be sociable and outgoing. If you find mixing with strangers a horror akin to sitting through back-to-back repeats of the Champions League, help is at hand.



Tre Azam tells us to network everywhere in order to meet the right contacts

INTROVERTS

ARRIVE EARLY

Introverts often get intimidated by the sheer size of an audience. Arrive early so that you can face the audience in "pieces". Try to talk to the organisers as they could prove useful with regards to making introductions later on.

SET GOALS

A fear of mixing with strangers cannot be overcome in one day. Setting clear-defined goals can ease this process. Try to set goals that involve meeting people: in a business setting, commit to meeting five new people. When you reach your goals you can leave, feeling satisfied about a job done well.

UNLEARN SHYNESS

Research shows that we learn shyness. As children we used to wander over to other kids in the playground and play together. As we get older we experience rejection and learn to "shy" away from being friendly. If talking to people is a challenge for you, start change slowly. Say something to a stranger in a lift just before you get off - something brief will do; "nice tie", "have a nice day" or just shoot them a smile. This may be a small change but it will help your confidence.

TIPS FROM THE TOP

MAKE FRIENDS

Never pitch for business when networking, the skill is to build rapport and speak as little business as possible... Make friends!

- Syed Ahmed, *The Apprentice* (Series 2) candidate

NETWORK EVERYWHERE

You've got to network everywhere you go so you get to meet the right people and once you meet the right people, it doesn't start off as a business thing, you make friends and then friends come in handy.

- Tre Azam, *The Apprentice* candidate

SAY SOMETHIN'

If you like something, say it! If you hear someone speak at a conference, tell them what you liked. If you see someone wearing something you like, tell them - it opens up an avenue to talk. Most of all, be open and SMILE! And remember other people are probably as nervous as you are.

- Anjula Acharia-Bath, CEO of Desi Hits!; the first and only Asian music store to offer an iTunes storefront

We want to see you using these tips! Let us know how you get on by e-mailing editorial@asianwomanmag.com

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