21 Networking Hacks for Millennials (That Work for NON-Millennials Too)

Whether online or IRL (In Real Life) networking skills are critical to sales success. But that doesn't mean that successful, established (30+) sales people are good at networking. And for millennials, networking IRL takes on a whole new meaning. Here are 21 networking tips for sales success, whatever your generation.



1. **Practice 3 opening lines:** have you ever been to a networking event and overheard someone use the exact same opening line they used with you 3 minutes ago? http://ow.ly/6Mbq30eINs8
2. **Bring a wingman:** Pairing up with a buddy who is supportive, not competitive, can help give you the confidence to walk up to a group of strangers and introduce yourself. http://ow.ly/6Mbq30eINs8
3. **Skip the business card:** Exchange contact info via your phone. http://ow.ly/6Mbq30eINs8 Tip: Business cards are NOT dead. It depends on your industry, and how cool or useful your biz card is.
4. **Follow-Up:** Networking doesn't end when you connect. The following day follow-up with an email, text or even a phone call.
5. **Connect:** Once you've met a new contact, connect with them online, ie LinkedIn. An exchange of names and phone numbers doesn't constitute a relationship or a prospect.
6. **Be helpful:** The rule of social networking is giving, not taking. The same applies to real-life. Share a relevant article, app or introduce a new contact that is relevant to your conversation.
7. **Solve their problem:** People are networking for a reason. Find out what problem they're trying to solve, and if you can solve it tell them how. If you can't, introduce them to a contact who can.
8. **Be curious and show an interest in others:** If you're at a trade show or other industry event begin with something like, "Hi, great to meet you. What brings you here? http://ow.ly/sMDB
9. **LISTEN = SILENT:** It's not about you, it's about who you're connecting with. Be quiet, listen to understand your new contact, not to make your own reply. http://ow.ly/ZsHy30eIPKm
10. **Share your story:** Help contacts relate to you by telling your story, not the pitch you think everyone wants to hear. That's how you stand out. http://ow.ly/oqul30eIPY5

11. **Ask for introductions, referrals or recommendations:** Find out which of your contacts is connected to your target, and request an introduction. http://ow.ly/EVeq30eIQ1l
12. **Choose the right networking channel:** Whether you network at a trade show, at a 5pm after work event or from your laptop go where your target is: not in your preferred work zone.
13. **Think like your target:** Adapt to be where your audience is: if they work in coffee shops, go work in coffee shops! If they're at Little League, sponsor a team.
14. **Host an event:** Put yourself in the shoes of your ideal clients. What type of event or content might they be interested in? http://ow.ly/rsKB30eIRhC
15. **Create free content that solves their problem and demonstrates your expertise:** Blogs, webinars, eBooks and white papers are opportunities to share your knowledge and connect with new people.
16. **Build a community:** A meet-up, a Facebook group or a LinkedIn group are all an opportunity to grow your network and share ideas and solutions.
17. **Look up:** If you're at a networking event, get your nose out of your smartphone and look at and meet people. You're there to network, not check your emails.
18. **Download networking apps:** Many trade shows and conferences use networking apps to connect attendees. Find out if yours has one - and if it doesn't, recommend one!
19. **Personalize your conference badge:** Don't just wear your badge as is: add your photo, @handle or other contact info to personalize it and be more memorable.
20. **Say your new contact's name during your conversation:** Using their name demonstrates you're listening (see #9 above) and helps you remember it.
21. **Practice your handshake:** Many people shake hands when introduced, especially at work events. Practice yours so it's firm not limp, and its friendly not awkward. Tip: Offer your hand first!

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