

Back to networking basics

by Chi Chi Okezie, contributing writer

As we are gearing up for the fall, going back to work/school, let's definitely keep networking top of mind. The summer was a great time to relax, refresh, and recharge. But, as we get back into business and our professional agenda, it is critically important to focus on building, fostering, and sustaining relationships.

Networking does not have to be a lost art in regard to building our businesses, professional endeavors, etc. As a matter of fact, re-visiting the basics of networking can enhance our strategic goals and mission for our networking objectives. In this article, let's focus our attention on ways that we can effectively lean into simple and practical foundations for success.



Basic Communications

Being able to properly explain who you are, what you do, and how you add value is essential in networking. Having strong, clear, and concise communication skills lead to more quality connections; as well as, access to resources, such as: introductions, leads, referrals, etc. As you are preparing for a networking event or encounter, consider these following questions:

- Do I have a clear elevator pitch/speech?
- Is my communication style coherent and effective?
- Does my communications align with my brand?
- Are there areas where I can improve?

Proper communication skills allow for better dialogue and relationships building. It also improves trust and credibility when interacting with others.

Basic Protocol

Developing and fostering relationships takes time and energy. Executing a plan and setting goals for networking lead to better

success rates and outcomes; as well as expands your networks and connections. Being respectful, patient, professional, and civil are basic protocols which should not be overlooked and undervalued. These soft skills enhance your executive presence and reinforce your brand proposition. It also creates space for collaboration and other potential opportunities. As you are building relationships through networking, consider these basics:

- Am I valuing my networking connections?
- Am I showing up as my authentic-self?
- Am I respecting the other person's time, resources, etc.?
- Am I being reasonable in my requests/ offerings?

These types of questions gauge the relationships and offer subtle boundaries. Utilizing proper protocols help negate conflict and build upon partnerships and cooperation.

Basic Management

Last, but not least, efficient networking involves skillful organization. An excellent way to build rapport and professionalism is

to manage your contacts and activities. Use technology and time management to support your efforts and foster your relationships. Managing your networking operations leads to several benefits. Consider these questions as you are growing your networks:

- Do I have a method for following up and staying in contact?
- Are my contacts organized/categorized for building relations?
- Am I using technology effectively to foster my relationships?
- How can I improve my outreaches to gain value in my networks?

Taking account of your networking activities shows competence and responsibility. It makes networking more accessible, meaningful, and productive; as well as enables you to proficiently leverage your contacts. In moving forward, make sure that your networking has a solid foundation. Apply these basic techniques for developing your networks through communications, protocol, and management. Reflect on the questions provided to evaluate your progress and celebrate your achievements. **TE**



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