

## **Make an Impact!**

Make an Impact! Networking and Communication  
Skills for Scientists

Julie Stearns  
Trainer

---

## Make an Impact! Networking and Communication Skills for Scientists

1. Introduction	2
2. Best Practices for Effective Networking	3
3. Setting Networking Goals	6
4. Best Practices for Self-Marketing	8
5. Preparing Your "Pitch"	10
6. Making Small Talk	12
7. Small Talk Language	15
8. Basic Tenets of Conference Etiquette	19
9. Literature and links	20

## 1. Introduction

To begin a conversation about enhancing your networking skills it can be useful to look at some of the general questions you may be weighing over:

- What career advantages can I derive from improving my networking skills?
- How do I present myself dynamically and professionally in a semi-formal context?
- How do I enter a small talk situation?
- How do I see myself as a professional?
- Where do I stand in the professional network?
- What are the do's and don't's?

The seminar and companion reader address these questions by helping you to communicate confidently in various semi-formal contexts in order to gain confidence in skillful networking.

Specifically, it involves identifying your present network and setting goals to broaden it, identifying your innate communication skills whether you are extrovert or introvert, practicing strategies for making small talk, preparing a solid "pitch", actively listening in a conversation, finding mutual connections, making new contacts and most importantly following-up to maintain them.

We trust that you will find this information useful and practical in conjunction with your ongoing communication needs.

## 2. Best Practices for Effective Networking

What characterizes a “good networker”?

**Networking is** building meaningful, lasting, mutually beneficial relationships one person at a time with other professionals (or in a specified context).

Successful networking isn't just handshakes, business card exchanges, tweets, coffee chats and emails. The strongest connections develop through shared experiences, and cultivating a network requires thought, organization and attention.

A real networker is not so much worried about if the person you are connecting with is “useful”, but rather she is enjoying sharing her network and helping others. It’s important to give as well as take. A good networker has two ears and one mouth and remembers to use them proportionately!

How can you use your network to help your connections? Can you share ideas, articles and reports you’ve found useful? Can you help a contact with a challenge they’re facing by introducing them to someone else you know?

- Be prepared. Learn something in advance about the people you want to meet.
- Use your referrals and ask to be introduced to people you would like to meet. Thank your referral for their help!
- Identify existing links you already have with people and build on those.
- Make an effort to get to know each contact personally, remembering details about their lives.
- Make connections across sectors, specialties and levels of seniority.
- Look for opportunities to work with new people.
- Take notes on the people you meet.
- Sign up for conferences, events and branch out beyond your job description.
- Use social media to engage with your network.

### Networking Tips for Introverts

While extroverts gain energy from social interaction, introverts may feel inhibited by small talk and loathe the idea of “networking” as a strategy, because of an imposed superficiality. However, introverts may also have innate qualities that support effective networking, such as taking the time to listen, reflect deeply on what they have heard and communicate their passion(s) vividly. Here are some tips that may prove to be useful, to both introverts and extroverts:

**Arrive at the networking event early.** Fewer people will make it easier to engage and you can be instrumental in making introductions as others arrive.

**Volunteer.** Ask if and how you can be of help. Having a purpose will give you the energy and confidence to engage actively.

**Reserve Judgment.** Avoid immediately dismissing individuals. Rather, keep in mind that every person deserves your respect, time and attention. He or she may be a potential networking referral.

### More Tips From Susan Cain’s „Quiet Revolution“ \*

**Collect kindred spirits.** Your goal, in life and at networking events, should be to find your people. “Forget the whole idea of “networking.” It’s a soulless, mechanistic word that encourages people to think of each other as instrumental cogs in a machine. Instead, look for people whose company you truly enjoy—people you sincerely like and want to keep in touch with.

**Focus on being sincere.** Focus on what you’re doing—not what you’re getting, or even giving. Ask yourself: What are you doing in this world? How does your work relate to your life path? How do the relationships you make at work—and at this very networking event—relate to that path? If you operate from this center, people will feel it. They will naturally want to help you, and you will instinctively look to help them.

**Prepare a few talking points.** Prepare some topics you might bring up in conversation: your thoughts on a speaker or your past experiences on the city you’re visiting. It doesn’t matter the topic as long as it’s likely to hold common interest with the person you’re speaking to. Once the conversation is off to the races, use your natural introvert talent of asking lots of curious questions and listening intently to the answers.

**Set a quota.** Decide in advance how many networking events you will attend per week, per month, per quarter. Select the events carefully—pick the ones that are genuinely interesting to you so you’re excited to be there.

**Choose your people.** Before the event, find a list of attendees, and pick the ones you want to know and have a decent reason for contacting. Reach out to them in advance, whether via LinkedIn, other social media, or an email introduction from a mutual friend. Not everyone will reply, but some will. Set up a meeting if you can. Instead of wandering the halls during breaks, looking for someone to talk to, arrange for pre-scheduled one-on-one sessions so you know where to go, with whom, and what to talk about once you get there.

**Pace yourself, and be strategic.** At most conferences, there's pressure to attend all events. Resist this, knowing that you'll be at your best and have more to give if you allow yourself to recharge.

\* Excerpted from "Quiet Revolution", Susan Cain - <http://www.quietrev.com/learn-to-love-networking/>

### Know how others can help you!

Know in advance what you are looking for. Effective networkers will often ask „How can I help you?“ or „I'd like to refer someone to you. Who could be useful for you to make contact with.“ Be prepared to answer this kind of question and be specific in your response.

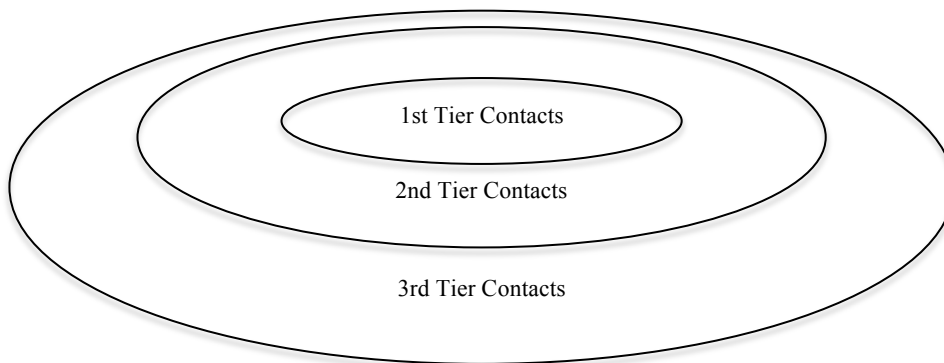
### Sustainable networking – maintaining contacts

And remember, enjoying networking is not the same as being effective. The significant difference is the follow-up and the way in which you maintain relationships. Follow up quickly - **within 48 hours**.

Send a handwritten note, an email an article or a referral. Communicate your interest in maintaining contact vividly and specifically. Also, keep your promises. If you promise to send an article, send it out as soon as possible.

Personalize your follow-up with personal details. Make notes on the business card specifying who you talked to and what you talked about.

### 3. Setting Networking Goals



- **First Tier Contacts** are the core of your network, people closest to you such as your friends and family.
- **Second Tier Contacts** are people you are friendly with such as your acquaintances and associates.
- **Third Tier Contacts** are people who you want to make contact with personally and/or professionally such as potential employers, institutes and referrals to advancement opportunities.

Create, track and evaluate your ongoing networking goals in order to enhance your Third Tier Contacts. Set realizable deadlines for yourself. For example, "I want to meet three people today during the conference" or "This month I want to add two individuals to my Third Tier Contacts." Measure if you have met your goal(s) and modify your ongoing goals accordingly

My Networking Goal	Contact Method	Referrals	By Date	Follow-Up

\* Spend 10 minutes every day building your network and maintaining contacts.

- Identify individuals you would like to add to your Third Tier contacts.
- Identify individuals in your First and Second tier contacts who consistently support you with referrals. These are natural connectors in your network, who are good at making links.
- Reciprocally, pay attention to how you can provide individuals in your network with referrals so that making Third Tier contacts is mutually beneficial.
- Examine if there is anyone in your network who can help you to make Third Tier contacts.

First Tier Contacts	
Name	Relationship to you

Second Tier Contacts	
Name	Relationship to you

Third Tier Contacts	
Name	Relationship to you



## 4. Best Practices for Self-Marketing

Self-advertising means **representing** a coherent, strong and individual personality. Try to get used to presenting your achievements and accomplishments in a positive manner – develop positive storytelling about yourself.

Consider these questions in terms of your „brand“ in an academic setting:

1. How do you see yourself? What visualized image do you have of yourself?
2. How do you introduce yourself?
3. What image of yourself do you convey by means of visual, oral and written communication?
4. Am I aware of who I am and what character traits are inherent in my personality?
5. Am I able to assess the effect I have on others?
6. Am I able to present my own achievements in a positive and coherent way?

### Professional Profile

My greatest Passions related to my work:

---

---

My natural Talents I bring to my work:

---

---

The Aspects of my Field I know most about:

---

---

Positions and Qualifications in my professional life:

---

---

---

## Personal Profile

My Interests and Hobbies:

---

---

My Strengths and Weaknesses:

---

---

Compliments People Often Give Me:

---

---

Things in My Personal Life I Never Grow Tired of Talking About:

---

---

My Likes And Dislikes

---

---

My Hopes And Aspirations

---

---

My Special Talents

---

---

## 5. Preparing Your “Pitch”

A “pitch” answers the question, “What do you do?” economically and vividly. It’s best to keep it short and sweet - a minute or less. Understandably, with complicated research this is challenging to do but well worth the effort and preparation.

In a networking situation, it’s important to contextualize and encapsulate your response to the question in a manner that tells the story, captures the listener’s attention, positions you accurately, communicates your passion and motivates the listener to want to hear more.

- **Position Yourself and Your Research** - Offer a wider lens, position your work in the larger context and then zoom in.
- **Engage the Listener** - What is the listener’s interest in your work?
- **Address the Expertise of the Listener**– Are you speaking to specialists or is it a mixed group of listeners? What information do you need to clarify succinctly in order to communicate your own expertise? Be thoughtful about using jargon. Contextualize the information to meet the listener at his or her level of knowledge
- **Highlight the Value of Your Work** – What is important about the research? Why is this information important for the listener?

More Tips:

- keep explanations **straightforward**
- use **short**, simple sentences
- resort to **commonly used** words
- **explain** technical terms
- express ideas in **concrete** terms
- use **descriptive** language

### Developing Your "Pitch"

Who am I? Position yourself!

---

---

---

What do I research? Highlight Key Language

---

---

---

What is important about my work? Highlight your Motivation

---

---

---

How is this topic relevant to the listener?

---

---

---

What's your take-away? What action would you like from the listener?

---

---

---

## 6. Making Small Talk

The art of making small talk is to listen attentively, ask questions and to find opportunities to make and build on mutual interests and connections. Be interested in the person(s) you are speaking with.

- Pay compliments. For example ... "I found the article you published in xy very inspiring..." "This conference is organized perfectly. It was really easy for me to find my way around." "XY mentioned your name to me, saying that you are the true expert in this field. Your contribution this morning was very informative. It has given me a lot of food for thought."
- Do you have any mutual acquaintances? Find or point it out!
- When talking, include personal details every now and again as this helps to keep the conversation going: "... I go to the gym every week..... Being a fan of this method myself,..... I've never been to Hawaii before..."
- Start the conversation with something positive and self-evident: Excellent venue... Great weather so far...

### First contact

**Greeting:** Make eye-contact – greet the person with a friendly smile.

**Name:** Tell the person your name – if you mention both your first and your family name, it will sound a lot more personal.

**Active opening:** Open with a comment related to the event and mention your area of expertise and the department you work for.

**Refer back to previous encounters**

## Conversation Starters

Ask open-ended questions and follow-up on the response with a more detailed question. Typically small talk begins with generic questions such as 'How are you?' 'What is your name?' 'Where are you from?' 'Have you been here before?' 'Do you have the time?' 'Where are you staying?' 'How do you like the conference?' and so on.

It helps to be prepared with a list of 8 to 10 questions you can engage people with. For example:

- 1) Tell me about your work/research? What do you do?
- 2) How did you get into that work/research?
- 3) What is unique or challenging about your discipline?
- 4) What do you like best about what you do?
- 5) What do you like about your job/field/research?
- 6) How did you get to your position?
- 7) What do you like or what don't you like about your place of work/ study?
- 8) How are decisions made?
- 9) What's your biggest wish for next year?
- 10) What's your biggest accomplishment so far?

## An Elegant Exit – Sustainable Networking

According to the psychologist Leonard Zunin (USA), a quick conversation **usually lasts 4** minutes. Disappearing earlier than that is considered rude, at least when dealing with US Americans.

Wait for your interlocutor to finish his/her sentences. Smile and compliment him/her, then say in an animated tone:

"... It was great talking to you. / It was great meeting you. I have just spotted one of my academic colleagues standing over there I'd like to say Hi to."

If you are talking to somebody who came on his/her own and does not know anyone

... offer to acquaint him/her with some of the other attendees. If you have had a **really good conversation** with somebody,... say

"... it would be nice to meet again?... I'll send my article to you by email... and we'll stay in touch. ... just give me a call. It would be great to..."

## Storytelling Strategies

Have stories prepared related to things people will remember about you. For example, your name, your research or your institute. Stories create anticipation, enhance attention and keep the listener interested. Stories will also help to reinforce your “brand” and paint a memorable picture of you and your work.

- a. Use **people, places, and things the listener knows**. Take the story as close to them as you can. Adapt to your audience - keep it relevant.
- b. **Fix the story in time and space**. The moment you begin telling your tale, they will want to know: Did this happen last week or ten years ago?
- c. **Start in the action**. Have a great first line that sets up the stakes or grabs attention. Describe the characters and settings. Set the stage. Define your key narrative points.
- d. **Have some stakes**. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? The people in your story have to want something.
- e. **Aim your story**. Learn the story as a whole rather than in fragments. Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Think about structure - start and end with a clear message.
- f. Emphasize the **adjectives and verbs**. Stimulate their senses. Establish conflict. Foreshadow. Use terms like Visualize this ... Imagine this ... Remember when ... Think about ... Picture this ... Have you ever had an experience where ... Let me take you with me to ... to draw the audience into your stories.
- g. **Stories have at least one “moment of truth”**. Your audience will instinctively look within your story for this kind of insight.
- h. **Build towards a dynamic conclusion**. Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Stories have clear meaning. When the final line is spoken, your audience should know exactly why they took this journey with you. In the end, this may be the most important rule of all. Your audience wants to answer the question, “What was that story all about?”
- i. **Economize the language and get to the point**. Be concise with the amount of information you deliver.

## 7. Small Talk Language

### Introductions

Hello, I'm ...

Pleased to meet you. My name is ...

Please call me by my first name.

### Greeting someone you've met before

"Oh, hello Dr. Birkenstiel, my name is.... We met two years ago at a conference in Hamburg. It is good/nice to see you again."

I'm afraid I've forgotten your name.

I'm sorry, could you tell me your name again?

What a pleasant surprise!

### Making contact with a stranger

I noticed you're from ...

I enjoyed your presentation. My name is ...

It's a pleasure to meet you.

Excellent venue...

Great weather so far...

### Approaching High Status individuals

May I introduce myself?

I'm delighted to meet you.

It's a pleasure to meet you in person.



### Informal Conversation starters

So what do you think of the conference so far?  
When did you arrive?  
Have you heard/ met anything/anyone interesting?  
What's your field of study?  
Where are you based? What's it like there?  
Have you been here before?  
What is your field of study?  
What do you do for a living?  
What is your line of work?  
What kind of work do you do?  
What do you like doing in your free time?  
Do you have any hobbies?

### Formal Conversation starters

I'd be very interested to know what you think of ...  
Now that I come to think of it, didn't the last conference take place in... xy.  
What is xy up to these days – I haven't seen him at this conference yet.  
What is your view on the new BA programs?  
How do you know / did you get involved with xy... (the subject, a person, an institution)?  
Have you attended the xy conference before?  
Which conferences did you find most inspiring?

### Conversation fillers

Is that right?  
That must be interesting.  
That sounds exciting.  
That must have been challenging.  
*Mirror Language:* Paraphrase or repeat what you have just heard to signal that you are listening  
*Body Language:* make eye contact and/or nod your head to signal that you are listening

## Networking

*If you are talking to somebody who came on his/her own and does not know anyone offer to acquaint him or her with some of the other attendees.*

Are you familiar with ...? Do you know ...?

Did you come with colleagues?

I must introduce you to ...

Introducing a colleague

I'd like you to meet a colleague of mine.

I'd like to introduce you to ...

This is ...

Have the two of you met before?

I have someone I want to introduce you to. Do you want me to introduce you? How do you want me to connect you? Through secretary? Email? In person?

## Following-Up

I'd like to talk with you more about this. Could we meet again this week?

I'd like to meet with you for 45 minutes. Can I call you tomorrow to set up a meeting?

I'll email you with some suggestions.

I'll send you the article. Can you give me your email address?

Give me a call (tomorrow) Here's my card

Let's stay in touch. Do you have a card?

I look forward to meeting with you again/It would be nice to meet again.

## Thanking

*If you have had a really good conversation with somebody, let them know it!*

Our conversation has inspired me.

I really appreciate the information.

Thank you for taking time to share your ideas with me.

I'm glad we had a chance to finally meet.

You've been enormously helpful.

I'm grateful for the feedback.

## Exiting Small Talk

Well, I promised myself I would circulate. So, it's been lovely meeting you.

I'm sure you want to meet other people. Thanks so much for your time.

It's been a pleasure. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to mingle a bit.

How about meeting later for a coffee?

I was wondering if we could continue our visit/chat/conversation later?

Will you excuse me? There's someone I want to say Hello to./ I need to speak with.

Listen, I've just seen someone I need to talk to. Excuse me a moment, I need to catch her.

Sorry, I'm afraid I have to excuse myself.

It was great talking to you. / It was great meeting you.

I have just spotted one of my academic colleagues standing over there I'd like to say Hi to. If you'll excuse me.

## 8. Basic Tenents of Conference Etiquette

### The obvious do's

- Be able to "pitch" yourself (in less than one minute).
- Have plenty of business cards.
- Always look busy (having fun as well!).
- Do move around (but not too much!)
- Refer to previous meetings, shared work, etc.

### The obvious don'ts

- Standing idle on your own.
- Preferring papers to human beings.
- Be very careful whom you criticise.
- Talk about "achievements" (talk about work).
- Ignore a new person who joins the chat.

### The stuff below the surface

- Remember that cultural diversity matters.
- Take into account other participants aims.
- Become a facilitator: it will pay off eventually.
- Strike a balance: knowing and being known.
- Seek (both first and second tier) facilitators.

### Before and after

- Find out about the organisers.
- Find out about potential attendees.
- Establish (and revise) your overarching objective.
- Share only when appropriate.
- Follow up with all contacts you had.

## 9. Literature and links

### Networking

**Make Your Contacts Count: Networking Know-How for Business and Career Success** (2nd Edition), Waymon and Baber, 2007 Publisher: AMACOM. ISBN-10: 0814474020

**Business etiquette: 101 ways to conduct business with charm and savvy** (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), Sabath, Ann Marie, 2010, Franklin Lakes: Career Press. ISBN-10: 1564146146

**Book Yourself Solid: The Fastest, Easiest, and Most Reliable System for Getting More Clients Than You Can Handle Even if You Hate Marketing and Selling**, (2nd edition), Michael Port, 2010 Publisher: Wiley, ISBN-10: 0470643471

### Self-assertion for Introverts and Extroverts

**Quiet Impact. How to Be a Successful Introvert**, Sylvia Löhken, Publisher: London: John Murray, 2014, ISBN-10: 1444792857

**Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking**, Susan Cain, Publisher: Broadway Books, 2012, ISBN-10: 0307352153

**The Confident Speaker**, Monarth & Kase Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 1 edition, 2007, ISBN-10: 0071481494

### Psychological aspects

**The Psychology of Human Communication**, Blaine Goss; 1994 Publisher: Waveland Press ISBN-10: 0881338273

**Handbook of Communication Skills**, Owen Hargie; 2006 Publisher: Routledge ISBN-10: 0415359112

**Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication**, Milton Bennett ed. Publisher: Intercultural Press (June 1998), ISBN-10: 1877864625

### Improvisation: Thinking on Your Feet

**Improv Yourself: Business Spontaneity at the Speed of Thought**, Joseph A Keefe Publisher: Wiley ISBN-10: 9780471216384

**Training to Imagine: Practical Improvisational Theatre Techniques to Enhance Creativity, Teamwork, Leadership, and Learning**, Kat Koppett, Publisher: Stylus Publishing ISBN-10: 1579225926