

NETWORKING FOR BEGINNERS



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Development Fund

Networking offers a wealth of benefits; from building a professional community to skill sharing and collaboration. If you're new to networking, here are our top tips to get started.

PREPARE YOUR PROFILE

Your **LinkedIn** profile is your new business card – expect to receive a flurry of connection requests following a networking event, especially if you've made a great first impression. Ensure your profile is up-to-date, features a professional headshot (no wedding photos here, please!) and that information about your business is clear, accurate and detailed.

MAKE A PLAN

Networking is an opportunity to build mutually beneficial relationships. While there may be opportunities to promote your offering, a hard-sell attitude and self-serving pitches tend not to be well-received.

It is therefore important to establish your motivation for attending the event and set realistic expectations for what you hope to achieve:

- ✓ Are you looking to fill skills gaps or seeking mentorship?
- ✓ Do you want to open doors to collaborative working and partnership opportunities?
- ✓ Do you need a sounding board for ideas or an empathetic business ear?
- ✓ Are you seeking new, alternative or more competitive suppliers?

PARTICIPATE

A common pitfall of networking is broadcasting rather than participating. Engage with the host, speakers and fellow delegates by asking questions, sharing interesting information and keeping conversations relevant. And who knows, you may just be invited to be a guest speaker or present at the next event.

FOLLOW UP

During the networking event, make a note of those who you'd like to connect with afterwards – that is, those who run businesses that complement yours and where there are opportunities to collaborate or exchange skills.



Don't forget about 1-2-1s

If someone sparks an interest during or after a networking, use that as a starting point for a conversation and invite them for an in-person or virtual 1-2-1 to keep the discussion going and see what opportunities may arise.

HAVE A REGULAR PRESENCE

Networking requires commitment – a commitment of time and energy. To form and nurture meaningful business relationships, you need to commit to having a regular presence and to keep in regular contact beyond the networking event space.



HAVE YOU ATTENDED A MENTA NETWORKING EVENT?

We host online and in-person networking events for business owners in Norfolk and Suffolk. Our events provide a fantastic opportunity to meet likeminded entrepreneurs in a friendly, supportive and informal setting – perfect for new and seasoned networkers.

To find out more visit
www.menta.org.uk/all-networking-and-events

NETWORKING QUICK TIPS

💡 BE BOLD, BE BRAVE

The professional setting of a networking event may initially appear intimidating. But remember, everyone is attending the event for the same reason as you, plus business people are just people after all.

💡 FIND YOUR NETWORK

You do not need to attend every event going. Choose one that suits you – whether weekly or monthly, regional or industry-focused, informal or conference, speed networking or full-day event.

💡 BE ORGANISED

Researching the host and guest speakers, preparing an “elevator pitch” and planning your journey in advance will ensure you arrive prepared, on time and fluster-free.

💡 ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

While it is important to set objectives for attending an event, it is important to not put too much pressure on yourself. Enjoy getting to know your peers, and if an event isn't for you, there are plenty of other networks ready and waiting to welcome you.

💡 DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW UP

A networking event is just the beginning so take the time to nurture those new business relationships. Leverage LinkedIn to engage with your new network through reading, sharing and commenting on content or endorsing skills.

