

RULES FOR WORKING THE ROOM

For many mid-level associates the thought of business-oriented cocktail parties and other gatherings congers up thoughts of sweaty palms and embarrassing moments. But whether we like it or not, we all know networking at events is a powerful tool for business development and career growth. The more relationships you build, the greater your network, and the greater the chance to increase your client base.

On February 28, Mary R. Crane of Mary Crane & Associates, speaking to an audience of mid-level associates at the City Bar's Professional Development Breakfast Workshop, "Establishing Strategic Alliances," tried to take the fear out of working a room and show mid-level associates how to get the most out of networking events.

"By following some simple rules," said Crane, "you will feel more at ease, meet and be remembered by the right people, and gain those important business alliances."

Arriving at the Event

Whenever possible, try to attend the event with another person. When you arrive, split up but agree to meet half way through the event to tell each other whom from the other side of the room is worth meeting.

Arrive on time. "It is important to think of an event as an extension of your work," said Crane. Upon your arrival, go to the bar and get a beverage. Holding a beverage gives you some-

thing to do with your hands and forces you to keep your hands at waist level. This makes you appear approachable and welcoming. Remember to hold the beverage in your left hand, keeping the right hand free for handshakes.

Introductions

One of the most important first impressions you make is in how you introduce yourself. First, provide your name, then a brief descriptor of yourself. Try to make the descriptor interesting to the person you are meeting, suggests Crane; this will help make you more memorable to them.

With the introduction always comes a handshake. The handshake is critical. It should be firm and strong, not limp. One trick to assuring a firm handshake is to hold your hand perpendicular to the ground and not tilted to one side.

Remembering Names

Listening is the key to remembering names. However, there are tricks, notes Crane, that can improve your chances of retaining someone's name after an introduction. First, try to create a mental image to associate with the name like associating it with someone you know well or playing on the sound of the name. Second, use the name at least three times as quickly as possible in normal conversation. It is by such repetition that you learn things.

If five minutes after being introduced your realize that you already forgot the person's name, don't assume that you blew it, advises Crane.

Instead, make a joke on yourself like, "I've been so busy at work lately I have trouble remembering my own name, would you mind telling me your name again?" It is better to ask than to walk away without that potential business contact.

After the Event

Just because the event is over doesn't mean your work is done. Take the time to follow up with the people you have met by sending a handwritten thank you note. Sending a note will help you become memorable to that potential client. Thank you notes, especially a handwritten one, have become a thing of the past. By sending one, advises Crane, you increase your chances of being remembered.

No one buys legal services from a law firm, reminds Crane. They buy them from an individual with whom they have established a relationship. In fact, just one relationship can provide a vast source of referrals over a professional career and knowing how to network and gather contacts is as important to a lawyer's career as any amount of legal knowledge.

For more information on the Professional Development Breakfast Workshops and a complete schedule of upcoming sessions, please visit www.nybar.com.

**NEW YORK
CITY BAR**

Forty-Fourth Street Notes
May 2006

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