

Mingle Like A Pro!

By Kimberly Law

If the thought of meeting new people at a business event sends a chill up your spine, you're not alone.

For many of us networking is something we dread. Unfortunately, these days, it's not what you know. It's who you know or who knows you, that really counts for business success. And even though trade shows and business mixers can be intimidating for anyone, they are also the perfect opportunity to network and build business relationships. To feel more at ease at your next event, prepare ahead of time, with full stomach, the right attitude and the right tools.

The buffet line-up can be a great place to strike up a conversation. Spending all your time there will not make the best impression.

Food is best saved for thought, not conversation. Juggling food and drink can present challenges when meeting people, shaking hands or while trying to carry on a conversation.

When holding a drink, use your left hand. This will keep your right hand dry and available for shaking hands with others.

Barbeques and ball games are in a league of their own and my warrant drinking out of cans and bottles. However for most events glasses over bottles are the preferred choice.

Don't forget your networking tools! Bring business cards, brochures or profiles and wear a name tag.

Name tags should be worn in line of vision. This means on the right, close to the shoulder. When you extend your right arm to shake hands, the eye is automatically drawn to that area.

Feeling lonely? Approach people standing on their own, groups of three or larger groups. When approaching a group of two you may be interrupting a private conversation and it could become awkward or uncomfortable.

If you are sitting when someone approaches you, show respect and interest by standing and greeting.

To meet and greet; make eye contact, smile, shake hands and say hello. Introduce yourself with your first and last name and, if appropriate, state your relationship to the host.

Don't use nick-names. Listen to how people introduce themselves and follow their lead. Ask permission before shortening a name or trying out a nickname, just in case it's not appreciated. Nick-names such as sweetie and honey are never appropriate in a business setting.

Avoid taboo topics like politics, religion, sex or money. In other words, stay away from anything personal or controversial.