



## An introvert's 6 step guide to networking©

Have any of these ever happened to you?

- ❑ You find yourself standing alone amidst a sea of interesting looking folks, all of whom look like they know everyone else but you & what's more, are talking to everyone else but you.
- ❑ Coming home from a conference you find yourself with a pack of business cards, most of which you can't remember meeting the owners of or why you collected them in the first place.
- ❑ You're working on a project that you'd love to involve uhm, what's her name that you met at that uhm, event that you can't remember the name of nor where she worked. Insert groan of despair.



Source: <http://shirt.thatdailydeal.com/>

All of the above, of course, are related to networking. Speaking of which last month I got a chance to attend the [Nexus Summit in NYC](#)<sup>1</sup>. I'll use that event to demo how I networked, guiding you through the process step-by-step. Here we go.

*Networking (n): interchanging information or services, among a group of persons or organizations<sup>2</sup>*

Networking is like exercise, we know it's good for us but many of us dread it. It doesn't have to be that way. Trust me. As an introvert, if I can do it, you can too. Here's a step-by-step guide to make networking easy, helpful & (almost) painless.

### 2. Figure out **why** you network – what's your networking strategy?

Seriously, why do you network? Take a minute & answer the question for yourself. I'll wait.

Ok, we're back. I network because it helps me fulfill my calling as a learning & development professional. To put it simply, I adore sharing resources & connecting people. This is a critical starting point. I network to strategically give away stuff (ideas,

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connections, resources) not to initially get something (though of course I love the connections that come my way as a result).

In that vein I'm reading Steven's 'Where good ideas come from – the natural history of innovation' where he talks about something called the 'adjacent possible.'<sup>3</sup> "The strange and beautiful truth about the adjacent possible is that its boundaries grow as you explore them. Each new combination opens up the possibility of other new combinations."

In other words networking helps expand your boundaries & what's possible. Each new connection potentially opens up new doors.

*Action step:* figure out why you network & make sure your networking systems (more about that next) match your networking strategy

## 2. Design your networking **system**

This is where most people fall down, suffering from Steve Job's sometimes fantastical flights of fancy, which were called magical thinking. Hate to break it to you, but that fabulous connection you jut made at your last conference /meeting / event etc. won't just magically appear & be maintained in your devices (including that most important of devices, your brain).

*Action step:* Here are some questions to ask yourself in designing your own networking system. Once you have the answer to these 4 questions you'll have your own system (and again, check back with your networking strategy from #1 & make sure they're [in sync](#)).

- How will you **collect** people's information?
- How will you **connect** with them after the conference / event / meeting etc.?
- How will you **maintain** the information?
- How can you **gift** them? (in other words share something that is of value to them)

Let's break them down.

## 3. How will you **collect** people's information?

I've tried a few technological methods but with this one I'm old school. I collect folk's business cards & as soon as I can, I write down how I met them & any details about them I care to remember. Then I either scan or take photos of the cards & send them to my VA ([virtual assistant](#)) who enters them into my master dbase.

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<sup>3</sup> "Nexus is a global movement of 2000+ young people from over 70 countries working to increase and improve philanthropy and impact investing by bridging communities of wealth and social entrepreneurship."

<sup>2</sup> Source: the Free Dictionary app by Farlex

<sup>3</sup> Check out the [book](#). Read [more about this concept](#).

*Action step:* what system will you use to collect your info?

4. How will you **connect** with them after the conference / event / meeting etc.?

Contact is both a noun & a verb. If you never contact your contacts why have them? I make a point of scheduling time during or after a conference to catch up with new contacts. Here are some of the ways I connect:

- I make sure their information is added to my master database (see above)
- I send an invitation to connect on LinkedIn &/or Facebook
- I send them a list of resources I think they might appreciate
- I send them a sample of my e-newsletter (with an easy way to unsubscribe if they choose)

*Action step:* what system will you use to keep connected with your contacts?

5. How will you **maintain** the information?

My master database is my go-to resource. I've been collecting contacts for years now & have more than 10,000 names in it. (Yes, it's backed up in triplicate.) My database has fields for things like basic demographic info (name, city, country) & also a section for notes (which comes in part from the info I scribble on the backs of business cards).

*Action step:* what information do you need to maintain your contacts & how will you organize it?

6. How can you **gift** your contacts?

I really dislike it when people come up to me at an event & shove a business card in my face & walk away. It feels like they've set a goal for how many cards to hand out while forgetting about the quality of the connection.

I appreciate my contacts time & want to help move their work forward in ways that are efficient for me. Ergo, when I initially meet people I look for ways to share resources with them. It may be introducing them to someone I think they would like to meet, sharing some of my learning & development resources or some other kind of resource. The sky is only limited by your imagination.

To make it faster on my end, I use a text expander (mine is called [TypeIt4Me](#)) which, when I type in a code, 'expands' to the message I want to send, which I then personalize for the person I'm contacting. This means ease & efficiency on my end, all the while gifting some resources.

Back to Nexus. So what's become of my connections? What are some of the resources I shared? And what are some resources that were shared with me that I'm happy to share with you?

- ❑ Check out Ayla Scholsser's (who I met at Nexus) organization [Resonate](#), which teaches leadership skills to women in Rwanda using storytelling
- ❑ Or [Geeks on a plane](#), which I learned about from David Dietz; "we travel by planes, trains, and automobiles to the most exciting international startup scenes with the sole mission of uniting geeks and exploring cross-border opportunities"
- ❑ Be creative with your resource sharing. A wonderful new friend from Nexus mentioned she's looking for a partner, so with a chuckle I sent her Amy Webb's TED talk [who hacked online dating](#).
- ❑ I met someone from Sudan who was concerned about conflict over cows so I happily hooked him up with a colleague who is doing similar work in Northern Kenya
- ❑ I met fellow Canadian Azita Ardakani, founder of [LoveSocial](#) a 'small & mighty communications agency focused on human interaction.' Check out her site – brilliant.

I'm talking with several folks about including them in some peacebuilding / conflict resolution curriculum I'm writing, & some others about possibly speaking during a social media course I'll be teaching this fall. [The beat \(& the connections\) goes on.](#)

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- Working Better Together: Working Smart with Creativity & Humour
- Transforming Workplace Learning through Social Media
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- One Size Doesn't Fit All: Conflict Resolution

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