



While bringing your best greeting opener and a thousand business cards used to do the trick for professional networking, it's not always going to cut it today. If you are finding your networking measures monotonous and not so engaging then your fellow eventgoers probably do too, and that's a lot worse. Here are five ways you can mix things up while effectively growing your network:

### 1. Thoughtful Branded Gifts

You don't need to give up your business card completely but offering [corporate gifts](#) that are branded with your business name and details can make exchanging contacts feel less like a chore and more like a gift. Make sure to customize your choice of gifts to the event. Branded picnic sets and wine coolers are great choices for an outdoor, offsite event.

### 2. Host A Pre-Event Meetup

Why wait until the event to learn everyone's names? If you notice there aren't any pre-event activities organized, take the initiative to set one up yourself. This thoughtful act means potentially getting to meet more professionals and holding better conversations without the pressure of the formal event.

If you go ahead with this, make sure it's a casual gesture and emphasize the open invite. You could arrange to have a drink by yourself or with a colleague before the event at a nearby location, and via your event's social media group or email chain, welcome your fellow attendees to join you. Whatever you do don't go out of your way to locate all attendees. Those whose contact details are not on display probably are for a reason.

### 3. Quickfire Questions

Love it or hate it, the speed-dating technique of bypassing small talk and cutting to the chase about your goals works. To get more out of your interactions at networking events, or ensure attendees at events you organize do, list some [important quickfire questions](#) and encourage others to do the same. If you're looking for the right collaborator or new employee at a large event and manage to have twice as many shorter but more purposeful conversations with this technique, you might just find your match!

### 4. Sing, Dance, Participate in Games

You don't have to be the athletic type to appreciate a game. Especially at networking events, any games facilitated are likely to be less of a competition and more of an [icebreaker](#). The physical activity may actually help attendees to loosen any nerves and provide an energy boost which is perfect for networking.

So, if it's an organized activity, don't be afraid to relax and have a dance in a professional setting. Get out of your comfort zone and participate. If you feel you look silly, chances are, someone else will feel the same and there you'll have a common talking point!

### 5. Don't Forget To Follow Up

A common mistake many people make at networking events is failing to send follow up communications to their new acquaintances. While [business](#) cards may grow your contact numbers, a follow up message will potentially grow your connections. Set some time aside to send a personalised message after the event. Start with 'Great to meet you...' or 'Thank you for introducing me to your business...' and keep it short and sweet. You want to acknowledge your gratitude for their time and leave a positive impression.

By following these five networking tips you are bound to forge more meaningful connections at your next networking event.