

Cold Feet: How to Overcome a Fear of Networking

You've heard that networking is a critical skill. You know how important it is to build a strong network of personal and business contacts. Maybe you still get cold feet when put in an environment where you are meeting and interacting with new contacts. Not to worry, you are not alone. Dr. Bob Dove, Vice President of the Lyceum Group, recently attended the NATCON Conference. He created this summary report on suggestions for beginning networkers and introverts.

Always be prepared to network:

- Present yourself in a professional manner
- Have business cards with you.
- Set objective at each event that is a networking opportunity
- Be aware of the dress code
- Differentiate yourself

Tips for the first conversation:

- Begin building rapport
- Avoid controversial topics
- Don't interrupt
- Act like it is an interview
- Follow-up

Suggestions for beginning networkers and introverts:

- Stand where people will approach you
- Give presentations and people will come to you
- Take on roles in professional organizations
- Have curiosity conversations – talk to people about the work they are doing
- Create opportunities to practice; start with a goal for a 20-minute conversation, eliminate the need for immediate gain while you develop confidence in the skill
- Attend formal programs for networking – alumni associations, pair and share meetings, alumni mentor programs, etc.
- Stay in touch with past clients for the benefit of future clients
- Create a list of resources to find people
- Create a list of questions to ask
- Train someone to train someone else in how to network
- Everyone already has a network, they just don't know it
- When networking you need to reciprocate later
- A confidence builder is to call yourself a good networker before you begin – the power of positive thinking
- Listen for other people's stories of successful networking
- We live networking, we don't do networking

Reported by Dr. Bob Dove, Vice President of the Lyceum Group, from data gathered at the NATCON Conference in Ottawa, Ontario during a presentation by Cathy Keates from York University. For additional info visit www.yorku.ca/careers/cyberguide