

# Career Advice

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## Networking opportunities enhance your career, life



**A**nationally prominent executive once said, "I owe every job I've ever had to networking." Networking opens doors to new connections and friendships. If nurtured diligently, these connections lead to opportunities that can help introduce you to new leads, extra-curricular activities and other tips that can enhance your life, both on and off the clock.

**Q.** Is attending a networking event "worth it?"

**A.** "Quality over quantity" is a good concept to stick with, both for the number of events and the people you meet. Although there are a few businesses in which the contrary is applicable (the nightlife industry, for example), align yourself with people who may bring value to your life. Note that networking is not the same as selling. Build genuine rapport that's memorable enough for you to keep in touch with people (and vice versa) after the event by finding things in common during your casual networking conversation. Ask your new acquaintances what brought them to the event, see if you share similar hobbies, for example.

**Q.** I've often ended up with a ton of business cards after a networking event. Where do I go from there?

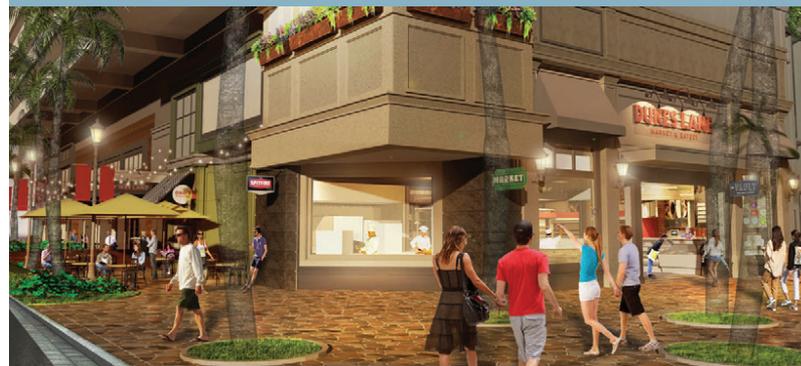
**A.** Out of the handful of people you meet at a networking event, identify a few whose presence in your life can be valuable to your career. Conversely, find ways to help those individuals after you've made your connections. What services can you offer them? What are your connections that can help them as well?

**Q.** How do I even go about selecting the right networking events to begin with?

**A.** Like with a lot of things in life, finding what's right for you is a trial-and-error process. Carve out some time to attend as many of the networking groups available in your local area — check your newspaper's local calendar. You can also ask colleagues and bosses for recommendations. Professional and business-focused organizations are a good place to start. Once you learn more about the organization you choose, make sure you can attend regularly, and that those groups fit around your business and lifestyle. Lastly, enjoy yourself — networking events are generally structured to make their attendees feel comfortable enough to start genuine connections.

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