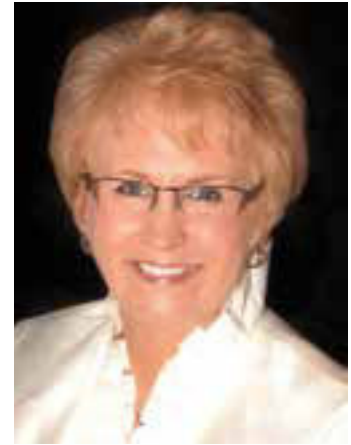


# NETWORKING: IT'S BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

By Sherry Knight, President & CEO, Dimension 11



Imagine standing in a room full of people with your drink in your hand and looking around to see who's there. That is exactly what I did when I was in my first job where I needed to attend receptions and connect with people. It wasn't too long after I was standing there that someone came up to me. He peered down at me (after all he was tall, and I am short), looked me in the eye, and said, "Sherry, you're just a snob!"

What, me? A snob? Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to ask him what I did to make him think that. His response, "You walk in here, get a drink and then look around to see who's good enough to talk to." He was right, that is exactly what I did, except I did it to hopefully be welcomed by whomever I went to talk to.

You know how it is. Sometimes, you go up to an individual or a group and they don't turn toward you. Not much fun! I recognize when I am not welcome, and to be truthful, it doesn't feel good.

Shortly after this dialogue, I left, and after the tears, I thought about my actions and knew it was time to make a change. Perhaps my new approach might help you if you want to network and build new, strong relationships.

**The more people you connect with, the more often you will be able to introduce this individual or others to each other.**

Try these ideas out:

- Decide how many new contacts you want to make at this event before you go;
- Decide what it is you want to learn ahead of time by being at this event;
- Stop outside the room, take three deep breaths and enter;
- Get a drink, if it is appropriate;
- Head straight to the first person who is alone – stick out your hand, introduce yourself and ask, "And what brings you here today?";
- Pause and wait for the answer, then follow up with more questions such as "How are you connected to \_\_\_?", "What do you hope to gather from this group?" or "Who can I introduce you to?";
- If there's a good connection, ask if you can continue the conversation at another time – if this is met with agreement, ask for a business card.

The more people you connect with, the more often you will be able to introduce this individual or others to each other. People like people that offer support, and nothing is more supportive than being able to introduce someone to others who can be helpful, whether that be at work, at home or in the community.

Networking doesn't have to be daunting – have a few key questions "in your pocket" and talk to the first person who looks and perhaps feels lost. You may just make a friend for life! As many say, "Just do it!" 📱

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