



## IMPROVING YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS

**Good networking skills give you a perfect opportunity to make assessments of the people you meet. Usually once you get chatting you can tell if this initial meeting will lead to a lasting relationship.**

If you feel it is not going to work, don't waste your time continuing with the conversation. When there is an appropriate lapse in the chat, excuse yourself and move on.

Although networking skills are about finding out what problems the other person/company has and how you can help them, it is also about how you can both benefit from your association.

### Coffee meetings

If you think you can build a good, rewarding relationship why not invite the person to a "coffee meeting" where you can learn more about each other? Make sure you meet on common ground, which takes away any comfort or familiarity advantage, so you are both equal.

This meeting should be shared time so you can both learn about each other. You don't necessarily have to make an appointment to meet again, although this would be ideal.

When you get back to the office, send a thank you email or a thank you note to the person; it always adds a friendly touch. Add the person's business card to your file and make a note in your diary or electronic calendar to follow-up in two or three weeks if you have not heard from the person.

If you send out a newsletter, ask the person's permission to add their details to the database, but always give an opt-out so they can unsubscribe.

At each networking session aim to find two or three people you would like to meet again and invite them to coffee meetings. This may be a very easy and enjoyable way of building relationships.

### **Assessing your contacts**

Another way of assessing the contacts you have made is to visit their websites when you get back to the office. This is a good information gathering exercise and when you speak to the person next time you will know more about their business, what they do and where you could fit.

There is a lot more to networking skills than merely drinking the wine or beer and eating the food.

Don't miss the perfect opportunity to assess new contacts and most importantly reassess your competition, as they are sure to be part of the gathering.

### **About the Author:**

Barb has been a successful business writer/editor/communicator since 1989. She writes in plain language and believes material for print and the web should be clear, concise and user-friendly. Please visit her website at [www.barbclews.com](http://www.barbclews.com) to find out more.