

Tips for Successful One-on-One Meetings

In-person meetings are one of the best ways to build and maintain relationships with your important contacts.

APRIL 2010

You should view every personal meeting as a gift—there are only 24 hours in a day, so any time that someone agrees to sit down with you is golden. If you go into such meetings without a purpose, you're missing an opportunity.

Prepare. And then prepare some more. Before meetings, do your research so that you can speak intelligently about the companies and people you are meeting. The Internet makes it easy to do basic research, and your knowledge will make a good impression.

Be respectful of others' priorities, requests, and comfort zone. People tend to talk first about the things that are on their mind the most. Let them dwell on that topic, even if it's not what you most want to discuss. Do your best to listen and add value.

Meet according to their schedule and location. When you request a meeting, it's proper etiquette to make it as convenient for the other person as possible. If a person tells you that a certain time is best, make it work.

Watch their body language. If people appear distracted or in a hurry, don't dawdle. If, on the other hand, they appear intrigued by a certain topic, stay with it until they're ready to move on. If they become very animated while discussing another aspect of their business, zone in on that.

Do more listening than talking. Ask open-ended questions to draw people out; this is how you will learn about their priorities and concerns. Asking questions not only gives you critical information but also demonstrates your interest in them and makes them feel important.

Take notes. A brief run-down of the key points you discussed is an effective way to end a meeting, and it will make follow-up much easier. It is thoughtful, however, to ask others if they mind you taking a few notes. If you're meeting informally and it doesn't feel right to whip out your pen, then take mental notes and put them into

your database. People will be amazed at your powers of recollection when you talk with them in the future.

Arrive on time and leave on schedule. The best way to demonstrate your appreciation for the appointment is to arrive and depart on time. Always predetermine the length of the meeting and confirm it when you arrive.

Combine professional and personal conversations. Some of the strongest business connections are initiated through personal connections. Invest the time to find the things you have in common. Learn about their family, their background, and their hobbies. Add it in a way that's not contrived.

Ask for what you want. Your goal for the meeting might be to brainstorm new client sources or voice your interest in joining the board of an organization. Whatever it is, don't leave the meeting without making the ask!

Ask if there's anything specific you can do for them. Make sure that they understand that you want this relationship to be a two-way street.

Confirm next steps. It's common for two people to leave an upbeat, enjoyable meeting with no idea of what comes next. Sometimes the next step is obvious, such as providing a referral to a colleague or forwarding information on an event. With more general "get to know you" meetings, the next step may be unclear, so take the initiative to suggest one, even if it's just to get together again in a month or two.

Excerpted from *Some Assembly Required: A Networking Guide for Real Estate* (New Year Publishing, 2010), written by real estate pro Chad Goldwasser, founder and CEO of Goldwasser International in Austin, Texas, and business-development guru Thom Singer.