

## Networking: A Beginner's Guide

If you are anything like me, even the word networking may seem overwhelming and stressful. However, in my experience, networking is beneficial to success in any industry, especially hospitality. So how does one go about networking? Where does one even start? In my time working in the industry and at Rosen I have learned some great tips to navigate the do's and don'ts of networking that can help create a stress-free experience. I have come to find that the most important element to networking successfully is being prepared.

The first thing to know about networking is to be yourself. This may be a bit cliché, but you always want to make sure your personality comes through when networking. Employers and peers alike look for people who are passionate and driven, but they remember people who they enjoy talking to. The best way to be yourself is to go in confident and prepared. You can build confidence by preparing both mentally and physically for any networking opportunity that may present itself.

Start by doing research on the company, employer, and the industry you want to go into. If you know ahead of time who you will be speaking with, then research can be very helpful. Knowing about the company can help you to answer questions and even allow you to prepare targeted and relevant questions to ask yourself. This can show the employer how interested you are in the position and that you take initiative. This is also a great way to determine if a company's mission/vision and goals align with what you are looking for before you pursue a position with them. Company research can be very helpful in networking events with multiple employers such as the Rosen Career Fair. Researching the companies in advance can help you to plan which ones you wish to connect with and assess the organizational fit. In some cases, you may not be able to research the companies ahead of time because some networking opportunities may present themselves in everyday life as well. When this happens, it can be difficult to be calm and confident. This is when industry research comes in handy. If you know about the industry you want to go into and the job you are hoping to get then you will be prepared for questions. Also, you can be very specific about what you are looking for and what your goals are. This way even if nothing is available at the time, you can make a connection that will help people remember you and keep you in mind when something is available. Knowing what you are looking for can help you to be more confident and calmer when meeting with industry

professionals. This will also help with your image in the eyes of the employer. They will see that you know what you are talking about and are prepared to enter the field you are looking into.

I know by now you have probably heard it a million times: “dress for the job you want, not the one you have.” This does reign true, but how exactly can dressing professionally help boost your confidence? In my experience when you are happy with your attire it can make you feel more confident. It is important to find something that you feel comfortable in along with looking professional. Finding outfits that make you feel as good as they look is an easy way to help boost your confidence. The next step is having a great resume. Rosen College offers many great resources to help with the creation of resumes. When it comes to resumes stick to the basics, keep it clean, concise, and easy to read. Another great way to be physically prepared is by having a list of questions in advance. If you were able to research the company then you can create targeted questions. You should however create a list of general questions that can be used in any situation.

Something that may be news to you is that when it comes to networking, mental preparation is just as important as physical preparation. Personally, I struggled in the past to start up conversations with new people and find things to talk about. Something that has helped me get over this is finding ways to talk with people more in my everyday life. I started small by simply talking to peers and coworkers and have gradually worked my way up to maintaining conversations with employers and industry professionals that has allowed me to make network connections. If you have trouble starting conversations, practicing in the mirror, and having mock conversations with friends or family can also be helpful. It may seem silly at first, but these exercises can help you to gain confidence and improve speech patterns.

Finally, when it all comes down to it just remember to breathe and stay calm. Not every opportunity is going to end with a network connection, but if you be yourself and just talk to people then the ones who matter will. If I have learned anything it is that confidence is what really allows your personality to shine through.

## About the Author:



Hi, my name is Taylor Brown and I am a senior graduating December 2020 with my bachelor's in Event Management. I have been working in the hospitality industry for 3 years now. This is my second semester with RCLC and my second year as a full time Rosen student. Rosen has helped me to break into the hospitality industry and make great industry connections.