

## Holiday Networking Tips

Are you one of those people who says, "My practice always slows down over the holidays," and then passively waits and hopes for it to pick up in the New year?

While it is true that business often does slow down over the holiday season, it doesn't have to...

The Holidays can be one of the best times to network due to all the social activities that occur. While some people may not want to start working with you until after the holidays are over, you can take advantage of holiday socializing events to get things set up for the New Year.

You never know whom you may meet at holiday social gatherings. It could be potential clients, new referral sources, or people that you might want to partner with in some way around your business. Here are a few tips for making the most out of holiday networking opportunities:

**1. Attend all the events that you are invited to and make the most out of them.**

Make an effort to have quality conversations with as many people as possible and show genuine interest in what they are saying.

**2. Eat before you attend the event so that it's easier to meet and talk with people.**

Having your hands free to shake other's hands and exchange business cards will make networking go smoother. If you do decide to eat at the event, eat (and drink) lightly. Try to keep your right hand empty for greeting people.

**3. Talk with people about their work and lives rather than talking about yourself and your practice or business.**

You will get a much better sense of how you can help people if you focus on listening to them instead of talking about yourself. Furthermore, people are much more likely to form a positive and lasting impression of you if you show interest in them, rather than talking about your business. When and if the time is appropriate, you can talk about yourself and what you do.

**4. Always, take your business cards with you to social events.**

Give your cards out to people when, and if, they show interest in what you are doing. However, it's much more important that you get other people's cards and then follow up with them. This gives you more control so you don't have to sit by the phone waiting for them to call you.

**5. Have a one sentence "elevator speech" ready telling people what you do.**

Make sure your elevator speech focuses on the solutions or benefits that you provide to your clients, rather than your job or title. After people ask, "What do you Do?," tell them briefly and then re-direct the conversation back to them.

**6. Don't try to make any appointments with people at social events.**

It's best that you contact people after the event to set up any appointment times. This way you will be able to have a more focused and professional conversation without interruptions.

**7. After the event, follow up with people with whom you might want to have a continued relationship with as soon as possible.**

Following up the day after the event is ideal while everything is still fresh in your minds. Call people you met at the event if they showed interest in setting up an appointment, or send a card or email telling them that you enjoyed meeting with them.

If you have the intent to make the most of out of holiday networking events this season, you might be surprised at the number of new clients or business opportunities that come your way in the New Year.

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Juliet Austin is a Marketing Coach, Consultant & Copywriter who assists counselors and other professionals in building successful practices. Her focus is on helping her clients overcome their fears, learn no or low-cost marketing strategies, create effective promotional materials, and develop and follow through on a plan of action. In addition to her coaching and consulting, Juliet

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