

Top 10 Tips on Making Meaningful Connections

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Now that you have the opportunity to get out and make the most of your NAWO community by meeting up with other members 'in person', here are a few tips on breaking the ice to make more meaningful connections.

1. **Just be yourself** – people want to get to know who you are, what you are interested in and what you do for work – usually in that order.
2. **Do a little preparation** – before attending the function, think about a few short stories that you might like to share with others, something interesting you read recently and how you describe what you do for work. People aren't interested in your resume – they just want a succinct insight into what you do, if they want more they will ask. Being prepared will help to build your confidence.
3. **Update your LinkedIn profile** – prior to the event, make sure your profile is up to date and reflects your current role and showcases your achievements and strengths
4. **Set yourself a goal** – decide before you arrive what information you hope to learn. You'll be amazed at how much more information you'll learn with prior planning.
5. **Don't recognise anyone in the room** – find yourself a drink and either look around for someone else on their own or join a group – simply say: **Hi my name is may I join you?**
6. **Have some good leading questions to ask others** – people love to talk about themselves. A great conversation starter is to ask what they like to do when they're not at work. Other conversation starters can open with I'm curious about.....; tell me more about ... etc.
7. **Listen with both ears** – pay attention to conversations for problems that you may be able to solve. Suggest you follow-up later rather than getting into a deep discussion there and then. It's an opportunity to reconnect with that person after the event.
8. **Introduce and connect others** – now that you have entered a group, look out for people who are nearby and if they are on their own, ask them to join you and introduce them to others in the group.
9. **Exiting a conversation** – when a conversation may have run its course or perhaps people are starting to get into a deeper 1:1 conversation that you don't feel part of, just excuse yourself and go and mingle with others. Say: 'Lovely meeting you, if you will excuse me, I'm just going to mingle a bit'.

10. **Connect on LinkedIn and Follow-up** – when you meet people you are interested in or would like to find out more about them, simply ask if you can connect on LinkedIn. Bring out your phone and do it immediately so that you get the correct spelling of their name. Next day, follow-up and say how nice it was to meet with them at the event and that you would like to organise a coffee catch up OR you would simply like to keep connected. Deepen the relationship by sending your new contact information of interest or reach out before the next NAWO event and see if they will be attending and you will already have a friendly face in the room to meet up with.

Here are a few reasons why it is important to develop meaningful connections?

1. **Your creativity is increased** - when you talk to others you gain different points of view. By seeing the world from different perspectives, your mind gets stimulated and new ideas are created.
2. **You can solve problems with more ease** – whether you are wanting to improve efficiency; manage difficult bosses/employees or solve another problem, it is likely that someone in your network of contacts has had a similar experience. Shared experiences create more options for a solution to your problem.
3. **You have a support team** – in this era of great change and time shortage, it's nice to know you are not alone. In fact, developing good relationships is one way to lower your stress!
4. **You have access to best practices** – other people are often willing to share their best practices that can help you cut costs and increase productivity. Make a habit of talking with your connections about what is the most valuable thing they've learned and what works well for them.
5. **You'll accomplish more in less time** – having a diverse network of connections creates a community of minds for you to tap into for answers that may otherwise take you a lot of time to find on your own. Become a resource in your expertise for your business connections and they will do the same for you.
6. **You can enhance your career prospects** – a strong network of meaningful connections can be very helpful when you are ready to look for new career opportunities. Let them know when you are looking for a new role and they can be your eyes and ears in the market.