

# Networking... Do your prep-work!

In a **pickle**



**What's the point of attending a networking event if you're not going to network? You're not just there for the breakfast, you could get that at home. The point is to make connections and build relationships.**

**If you're taking the time out of your busy day to attend a networking event, then you should make the most of it – so always ensure you do some prep-work to take full advantage of the event and the people you are going to meet.**

## 1. Define Your Goals

Are you looking to make a sale? Meet like-minded people? Knowing why you want to attend a networking event will dictate how to prepare.

## 2. Gather Your Materials

Now that you know why you're going, figure out what you'll need to take. Business cards are a must. In addition you should take a pad and pen for taking notes. Make sure your calendar is up-to-date and have access to it so you can make appointments on the spot. If your calendar is on your Blackberry or iPhone, make sure it's fully charged.

## 3. Prepare Your Presentation

You may not be an official speaker at the event, but you may be responsible for a short presentation or a one minute pitch. Each person you meet will be a chance to make a lasting impression on a potential client or associate. Make a mental list of key points you want to make about your business.

## 4. Dress Appropriately

This should be a no-brainer, but it's worth mentioning. Make sure your attire is professional, no matter what the invitation requests. Not all networking meetings require a suit, but "dress casually," never means shorts and a t-shirt!

## 5. Follow Up

Great interactions and piles of business cards are worthless if you don't continue the conversation. Follow up with the contacts you make and try to make appointments within the first week after the event.

It's really simple. Networking events are for networking. Take time to prepare so that you get the most out of your networking meeting. Order extra business cards and organise your calendar before you go. Be engaging and purposeful during the meeting and pursue your leads once the meeting is over.

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Blog [www.inapickle-va.com/blog/](http://www.inapickle-va.com/blog/)  
Freephone 0808 1081436

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