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Make First Encounters Count This Summer

By: David Richman | June 9, 2023

Be intentional about which networking events make it onto your calendar this summer as they are an important aspect of new client attraction. How can you make first encounters count while ensuring your attendance is perceived as genuine rather than superficial?

First, identify events that you, your family or your clients feel strongly about so your attendance makes sense. For example, you know that your client Denise is involved in an event benefitting Alzheimer's research. Give her a call about an upcoming event:

You: "Denise, are you going to the fundraiser supporting Alzheimer's research next month?"

Denise: "Of course. In fact, I am a co-chair for the event."

You: "That's great. It's such a worthy cause. I will be buying a ticket today and will see you there."

Second, when you're at an event, ask questions that show genuine interest. Attendees are likely there because they feel deeply about the cause or charity. A question such as, "What brings you here this evening?" could return some powerful emotions. Let's imagine you encounter Sarah at the Alzheimer's event, and she shares that both of her parents suffer from the disease. Ask her thoughtful questions about how her parents are doing and how she is coping.

Third, practice agenda-less listening. Rather than thinking about what you could say to look smart or generate a first meeting, listen to Sarah's answers and ask thoughtful follow-up questions.

By approaching your conversation with Sarah with genuine interest and asking thoughtful questions, perhaps you discover she is interested in getting more involved with the organization hosting the event. Given your connection to Denise, you could say, "I happen to know the co-chair of this organization. She will likely be tied up all evening and I'd prefer to connect you two in a better setting. Would you like me to reach out to her and circle back with you?" Rather than pivoting the conversation to what you do for a living and pitching Sarah, you are connecting her to someone of value, thereby presenting a follow-up opportunity.

Bottom line: When you meet someone for the first time, be intentional. Ask questions with genuine interest and practice agenda-less listening to help you make first encounters count and create an opportunity for a follow-up phone call.

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David Richman
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