

Eight Steps to Connect with Someone New

1. *What do you want to be known as?* What is your personal brand? What is the message you send -- and your audience receives -- about you. Do you want to be known as a problem solver, an expert, a philanthropist? Creative? Aggressive? Dynamic or Disciplined?
2. *Pay a compliment.* Who doesn't want to hear something good about themselves? "You showed excellent patience." "You have a wonderful sense of style." "You don't know me but I read about your company's latest acquisition of "X" company and see how that will better position you in the market."
3. *Ask a question.* The good thing about a question is that it leaves the conversation in the other person's control and takes the angst off of you. "What brought you here today?"
4. *Say something funny - if you are funny.* If you are standing in line somewhere, it can be boring and tedious. A funny comment will break the ice with those in line. Never poke fun at someone else's expense. "I love to get coffee here so that I can share the experience of overpaying for beans and hot water with lots of people."
5. *Offer to do something for them.* People are generally struck by a stranger that offers to do them a favor. "I have a good article on that in my office. If you give me your card I will be happy to forward it to you."
6. *Send them something unexpected that relates to something you talked about during a brief encounter.* If you met at a meeting, make note of something they are interested in and send them an article on a relevant subject, a clipping you saw that featured them in a newspaper or publication, or a simple greeting card for a special occasion.
7. *Ask questions and listen.* People always want to talk about themselves. Their nametag is a great place to start. What does your company do? What was your biggest obstacle along the way? Always have the grace to include everyone in the conversation.
8. *End graciously.* To end a conversation and move onto the next person you would like to meet, simply say, "It was very nice to meet you and I look forward to hearing more about your business in the future." and depart.