

The I's have it— The Introverts, that is

Networking, at its root, is relationship building. The good news is that even the most introverted I's have what it takes to network like a pro. For those still getting their sea legs, these tips take the work out of networking for introverts: from the one-on-one lunch to the conference mixer.

1 Use other channels, not just the in-person ones

Balance in-person events with online networking via Twitter chats or LinkedIn. Both are great places to connect with colleagues and industry pros in your comfort zone.

2 Mind your schedule

Take a holistic look at your schedule, lest you end up in back-to-back mixers the night before an important meeting. On networking days, be sure to break it up with a re-energizing activity, such as a walk around the block or a solo coffee break.

3 Ask questions

Extroverts may naturally do the heavy lifting at in-person events. But have some questions ready so it's not a one-way conversation. Try: "How did you get started in your career?" Or, for conferences, "Which sessions have you attended so far?"

4 Turn on your listening superpower

People are often focused on their own agenda while networking, so rapt listeners can gain great insight with well-tuned ears. But don't confuse listening with "staying quiet because that's more comfortable."

5 Go ahead, get personal

Meaningful conversations (and the people we have them with) are memorable. Don't be afraid to ask where someone is from, or about their kids, their hobbies, or the best book they've read lately. These everyman queries foster commonality and, ultimately, bonding.

6 Be bold

This may prove hardest, but most important, of all. Practice inserting yourself into conversations with a polite, "Can I join you? What are you talking about?" People will understand: it is a networking event, after all.