



**Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful**

Training | Coaching | Speaking
www.gildabonanno.com
gilda@gildabonanno.com
203-979-5117

How to Network at Holiday Parties

'Tis the season for holiday parties! Whether you're looking for a job or just looking to make contacts in your field, holiday parties are a great way to build your professional network. And networking is really just another form of communication - so here are five guidelines for how to communicate/network successfully at holiday parties:

1. Have a Plan

Before you decide to attend an event, focus on your purpose for attending. Is there anyone in particular that you'd like to meet, or information that you are looking to gather? Will you share with people that you are in the market for a new job, or are looking for new clients? Having a plan will make it easier for you to focus your attention and make it more likely that you will be successful.

2. Listen

Good networkers listen more than they talk. Resist the urge to dominate the conversation with tales of your professional prowess or your favorite (and lengthy) holiday anecdote. Ask open-ended questions; these questions often begin with "how" or "what" and require more than a "yes/no" answer. And then actually listen to the answers. Demonstrate that you are listening by your non-verbal communications, for example, by making eye contact.

3. Everything in Moderation

Whether it's sponsored by your company or the local professional association, a holiday party is not the place to sample all the free booze you can swallow or stuff yourself with the free shrimp. You are there to meet and greet people and you can do that best when you are sober and focused on people, not the bar or buffet table. In fact, I recommend that you have a snack before you go to the party so you're not starving (which helps if you're dieting, too).

4. Be Confident

If you hate networking and are uncomfortable schmoozing with people, recognize that many others feel just as uncomfortable as you do. Reach out to them and they'll be grateful – and you may just make a great professional connection! Another way to network confidently is to "tag team" the event with a colleague. You both attend and each of you talks about the other person's accomplishments. For example, I recently attended an awards event with a colleague who had won an award the previous year – it was far easier for me to introduce her and say, "Have you met Lisa? She won last year's award," than for her to say, "Hi, I'm Lisa and I won last year's award." If you do tag team, be

© 2008 Gilda Bonanno LLC All rights reserved

For other issues of this newsletter, visit <http://gildabonanno.com/articles.aspx>

To receive this twice-monthly newsletter delivered to your inbox, email gilda@gildabonanno.com



**Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful**

Training | Coaching | Speaking
www.gildabonanno.com
gilda@gildabonanno.com
203-979-5117

careful not to spend all your time just talking to your tag team partner or people you already know well, which defeats the purpose of networking.

5. Follow Up

If you meet someone interesting, make a decision to follow up within a few days with a quick call or email. It can be as simple as an email that references your conversation, such as, "I enjoyed meeting you at the Chamber of Commerce party yesterday and discussing our children's college search process." Unless you schedule time in your calendar for following up with your contacts, you will have a stack of business cards on your desk that will only collect dust.

If you follow these five holiday networking tips, you'll be able to communicate effectively and build your professional network. And having a strong network will be useful no matter what the future brings.

© 2008 Gilda Bonanno LLC All rights reserved

For other issues of this newsletter, visit <http://gildabonanno.com/articles.aspx>
To receive this twice-monthly newsletter delivered to your inbox, email gilda@gildabonanno.com