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**D**riven to look at new ways for winning business in today's recession, many people are following the networking trail without really understanding what it is all about and how to be a successful networker.

I see many companies and firms adopting a scattergun approach, encouraging all members of their staff to attend as many networking events as possible without strategy and training.

Networking – the ability to make valuable connections and win referrals – may come naturally to a few, but to the majority it feels a little alien.

We've all gone to that drinks reception, not knowing a soul, and turned on our heels and run.

The first key is preparation. Start by choosing the event that interests you. That way you'll go with a positive attitude and that is half the battle to being successful in anything.

Next, try to get the delegate list in advance, decide who you would like to meet and do some homework on them.

You can then open a conversation with a little nugget you know about their role or their business and you are off to a flying start.

It's stating the obvious I know, but bring plenty of business cards and your own

## Networking is about trust not a quick sale

### First Person

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business, and listen to them. By listening I mean genuinely engaging with them, not working out what you are going to say next while they are speaking.

When you take their business card, actually read it, and when you do get an opportunity, note on it something which will remind you who they are.

Remember to store business cards for the long-term, they can be gold dust and should not be wasted.

Following the meeting, gently follow up in the next couple of working days, don't leave the trail to go cold, but don't do it in a direct sales manner. Networking is about building up trust, not a quick sale.

These are just a handful of tips for productive networking.

If you would like to learn more, Angels Bring Business will be hosting a seminar on December 13 featuring international networking speaker and guru Rob Brown. Please contact Wendy at [www.angelsbringbusiness.com](http://www.angelsbringbusiness.com) for details.

easy to read name badge. Then you haven't got to worry about pinning on a temporary name badge and you will look professional.

If you find yourself in that tricky situation of having to break into a closed circle of delegates, I always think honesty is the best policy.

Explain that you are new and would appreciate their support. Introduce yourself and take it from there. Appealing to their better nature usually does the trick and you have lost nothing in trying.

Once you have struck up a conversation with someone, take time to ask questions about them and their

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