

VIRTUAL NETWORKING ETIQUETTE & TIPS



Virtual Networking Etiquette

In a matter of weeks, we went from occasionally attending virtual events and meetings, to only doing just that. It hasn't been perfect, but companies and professionals have shifted quickly allowing business to chug along even in the most bizarre of times. With this new virtual frontier comes a new etiquette. We've compiled tips for making virtual networking—a.k.a. conversations—productive and beneficial.

Make it matter: No doubt the look and feel of your home office is not the same as a traditional office but that doesn't mean you should get comfy. Come prepared to fully engage e.g. use video if others are, dress appropriately to make the meeting feel real. If you're hosting, come with an agenda. If you're attending, research the host and come with questions.

Mute your mic (sometimes): We've all been on large virtual calls when a persistent tapping sound or loud cough interrupts out of nowhere. For big calls where you're mostly listening, mute is the way to go.

For smaller calls, however, mute is not a given. According to [Google](#), "milliseconds matter." A delay of even five-tenths of a second when fumbling to unmute yourself is more than double what we're used to in-person, and it's distracting. Plus, those "mmhms" and "OKs" are a natural part of conversation and demonstrate engagement.

Also, pass the mic: Studies show we take 25 percent fewer speaking turns on video calls where social cues are harder to decipher. With people chiming in less, video calls tend to be less dynamic. Do your part to make sure the conversation flows. Be inclusive. If you've had the stage for a while, ask someone else their thoughts.

Stay in the "room:" It's tempting to check email, IM with colleagues, or start opening other browser tabs, but losing focus not only takes you elsewhere but it's distracting for the host if they see your eyes shifting or hear you typing.

Lightbulb moments: Sometimes we're so focused on who we're speaking to, we forget to check ourselves out. Make sure the room you're in is brightly lit or you're near a window so you're visible to others. If you can, use a neutral background to limit distractions.

Save the snacks for later: Similar to the first point, we can get a little too comfortable in our home offices, but even if you spent the morning homeschooling your kids and skipping meals, keep the snacks (and crunching) at bay.





Making Meaningful Connections with Virtual Networking

Virtual networking is new for everyone. Love it or hate it, it's a must to keep things moving until we return to live events and meetings. While it takes some getting used to, it is possible to make great strides virtually. It just takes a bit strategy and re-tooling of our brains. Here are some tips for making sure your virtual networking session is a slam dunk.

Clarify your goals: What do you want to get out of networking? List out your goals, then figure out how to reach them digitally. There's no shortage of virtual events where professionals are waiting to connect.

Prep for the call: Make a list of topics you want to discuss then create some relevant conversation starters. This will keep the conversation flowing if there's an uncomfortable pause.

Make it mutually beneficial: You're networking for a reason and so are the people you'll meet. It's OK to ask for what you need but demonstrate the benefit for the other person, too.

Make a solid profile: Most virtual platforms will have you create a profile ahead of the session. The more information you put on your platform profile, the better connections you'll get. Be sure it's professional and thorough, and the new contacts will come straight to you.

Follow up: Don't let the connection end with the session. Follow up via email or find your new contact on LinkedIn while the discussion is still fresh. The true relationship-building comes after the initial intro.

How to Make Networking from Home Not Awkward

Networking anywhere can be uncomfortable if you're not prepared. Add in audio delays, screaming children, or background distractions and it can downright awkward. While we do our best with what we've got, here are some tips for making networking from home productive (and enjoyable).

Research attendees ahead of time:

Most virtual event platforms will have users create a profile and bio ahead of the event. Collect as much information as you can from profiles as well as LinkedIn so you have a sense of who you're chatting with.

Be human: Studies suggest people perform better when they occasionally share personal information. If it's early in the call and not distracting, ask about the cat strolling in the background or where the other person is located. And it's OK to laugh at toddler cameos.

Suggest a 1:1 meeting: Large virtual chats can sometimes get overrun by the loudest in the group. If you're finding it hard to talk with the person you most want to connect with, let them know you'd like to schedule a break-out chat where you can talk 1:1.

Virtual Networking Tips for the Technologically *Un-Savvy*

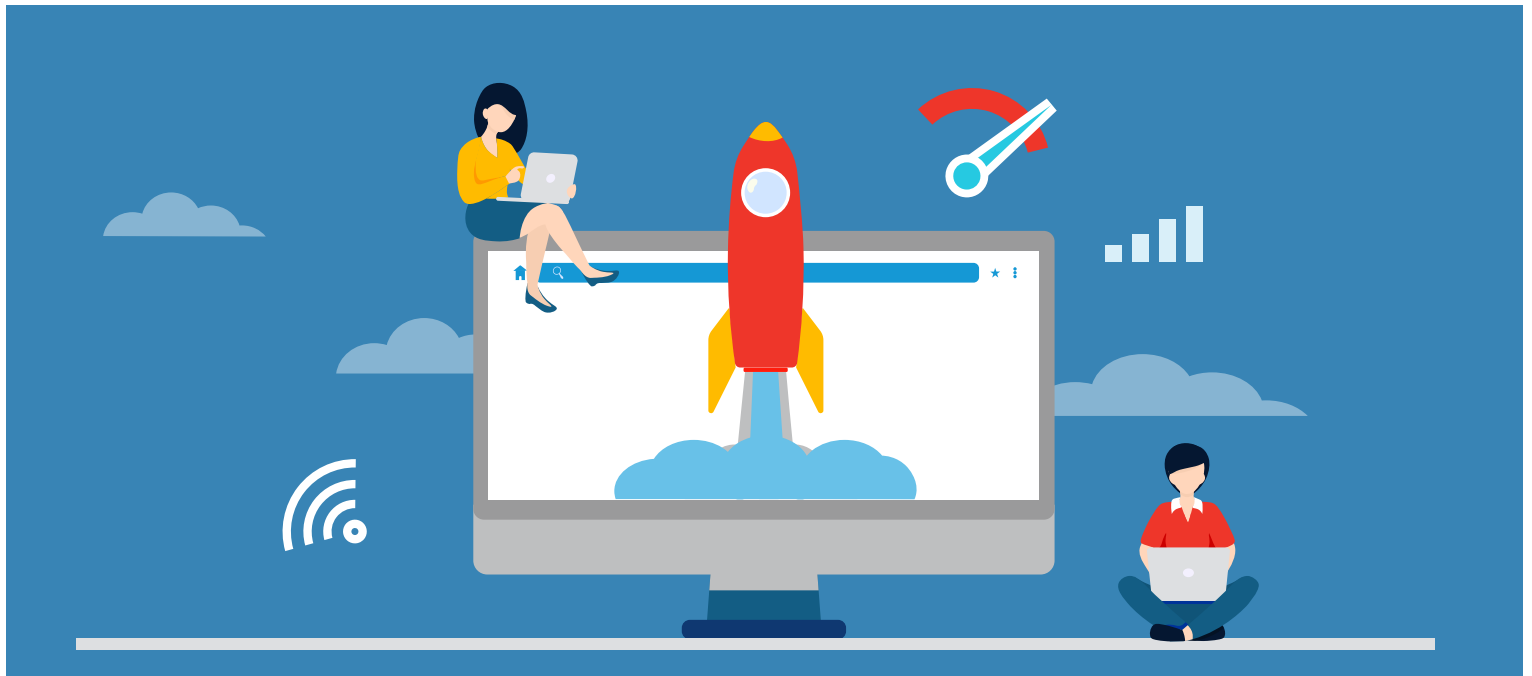
If virtual networking is unnatural or intimidating for you, you're not alone. Different events are hosted on different platforms and not all of them are user-friendly. Is your mic on? Is your camera? It can be nerve-racking with a meeting looming and you're not sure if everything will work properly. Here's how to make things a bit smoother.

Check the platform's website: Once you know the platform the networking session will be hosted on, check their site for "how-tos." Unsurprisingly, competition is high in the virtual platform space right now and many companies are offering video tutorials to showcase their product.

Check YouTube: The beauty of YouTube is if there's a technical question, likely someone, somewhere has made a video about it. The platform will probably have their own channel, but also look for people who have done platform comparisons or documented their experiences.

Login early and do a test run: As soon as you're logged in, see if you can do a test call. If other colleagues are attending, give them a ring to test your video and audio.

Check your internet connection and speed: At least a day before, [check your internet connection](#) so you can troubleshoot any issues or call your service provider. You can easily check your internet speed at [SpeedTest](#).



Sources: [Google](#), [Forbes](#), [Fast Company](#), [ZD Net](#)