Handout 8: The Do’s and Don’ts of Networking

DO

• Carry a business card. Have at least 20 and keep additional cards in your bag, wallet, or car. This is a great way to ensure that people remember you and also know how to contact you
• Always keep your diary handy so if you are invited to other meetings or networking functions you can say yes or no immediately. This increases your ability to take advantage of the opportunities which may present themselves at these meetings
• Always carry a pen or two so that you can write down the details of new contacts
• Look out for people who are at their first networking meeting Try to make these people feel welcome the contact may prove to be a productive one for you and your agency
• Book and prepay for any functions you are going to attend. If you can’t attend send someone in your place or if this is not possible make sure phone and let the organisers know of your inability to attend
• Prepare a short introduction that clearly explain who you are, where you are from and what you are hoping to gain from the network
• Turn off your mobile. If you are expecting an urgent call at least turn off the tone so that when the call comes through you can discreetly leave the room without disturbing others
• Do some research on the network meeting your attending – what is its history, its vision, its current activities
• Introduce yourself to strangers this is perfectly acceptable in a networking setting
• Attend some groups regularly so you develop a trusting relationship with workers from other organisations
• Arrive on time
• Make eye contact when talking to people and listen attentively
• Offer to help the meeting organiser
• Read the local paper and attend to state and national affairs It can be helpful to have extra things to talk to people about and it can also help you to establish if you share similar values and attitudes
• Move out of your comfort zone – don’t be afraid to speak up or contribute to the activities of the networking meeting

DON’T

• Monopolise the conversation – networking is about sharing ideas
• Don’t work the room – you don’t need to speak to everyone just ensure you have quality conversations with a few
• Don’t leave early unless you have to some of the best opportunities occur before the meeting and after it
• Don’t name drop its boring
• Don’t gossip – the sector is small and your words are likely to come back to haunt you
• If alcohol is served don’t drink too much it doesn’t look good and you can’t think as clearly
• Don’t boast about yourself or your organisation it can leave a negative impression
• Don’t bad mouth your service remember you are there to represent your organisation

Remember issues of confidentiality – it is important that you do not mention the names or any other identifying information about clients. Make sure you do not mention any critical information that should not go beyond your organisation.