

Marketing Techniques

Networking Opportunities

There are different definitions of networking, but a particularly useful definition is the one given in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*:

“To interact or engage in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support.”

As you will see from this definition, two keys to networking are that it is “informal” and “mutual.” This type of networking includes meeting and interacting with people informally at social and business events. This is where it really pays to have clearly defined your target markets. You simply do not have the time to network with “everyone” who might possibly ever have a need for an event planner.

While some of the people you meet may have an immediate need for an event planner (or know someone who does), in many cases you are laying the foundation for **future** business. By establishing relationships through networking, you can be the one people think of when they need an event planner.



This section offers a variety of ideas, but you don't have to do all of them. Choose a few to begin with, based on your target markets. If the first ones you try don't turn out to be great networking opportunities, scratch them off your list and try something else.

Meeting with Vendors

Earlier in this guide you were given advice on developing relationships with vendors, with the aim of learning about event planning and finding resources to recommend to your clients. Another very important reason to develop relationships with vendors is so they can **refer business to you**.

TIP: Referrals from vendors is an incredible source of potential revenue that many event planners overlook. Consider establishing relationships with vendors. They could bring you a steady stream of new clients without advertising!

Arrange meetings with as many vendors as possible — venues, caterers, florists, rental companies, photographers, etc. Remember, you are not only there to get to know what products and services each vendor supplies, but to give them the chance to get to know you.

Bring business cards and brochures and prepare to **sell yourself** and your event planning services. Tell the person you are speaking with that you believe in mutually rewarding relationships and would be pleased to send your clients to them. In turn, you would appreciate it if they would pass on your name to their prospective clients that have not contracted an event planner.

As was mentioned earlier, it is extremely important for you to foster a good working relationship with many vendors. It is true that people do business with those they like and **respect**, and if they like and respect you, they will recommend you. Following the tips in the sections on working with vendors and developing interpersonal communication skills can help you build a great network.

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