

A blurred background image of a business meeting. In the foreground, a woman in a white blazer is looking at a tablet held by a man in a light blue shirt. They are both smiling and appear to be in a collaborative discussion. In the background, other people are visible, also in a professional setting.

# THE HR LEADER NETWORKING GUIDE

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5 STEPS TO CREATING  
AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

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# 1. CULTIVATE YOUR MINDSET

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The process of connecting with others begins with checking in with yourself.

## BE PRESENT.

Leave worries and distractions behind to make room for new possibilities.

## TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.

Assume you must be the one to reach out and create new connections.

## EMBRACE OPENNESS.

Be willing to share openly, even if it means being vulnerable.

## 2) USE BODY LANGUAGE

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Your connection with another person begins before either of you speaks.

### ADOPT AN OPEN POSTURE.

Don't cross your arms or stand at an angle. Lean in to show interest.

### SMILE.

Not only does it make you more approachable, but it can improve your mood.

### MAKE EYE CONTACT.

This shows interest in the other person and deepens your connection.

# 3) FIND CONNECTION POINTS

Identify people who seem receptive to you, introduce yourself, and get to know them.

## READ THE ROOM.

Look for others with open body language. Make eye contact as you approach.

## OFFER TO SHAKE HANDS.

Not everyone will accept. That's OK! You can use the moment to start a discussion.

## TAP INTO YOUR SHARED GOAL.

You're both here to meet new people. Use that shared experience to bond.

# 4) LISTEN WITH INTENT

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Before you can be a good conversationalist, you must be a good listener.

## BE CURIOUS.

The other person knows things you do not. What can you learn from them?

## SHOW YOU'RE LISTENING.

Reference things they've said to demonstrate your engagement with the conversation.

## BALANCE THE CONVERSATION.

Be engaged without dominating the discussion. Allow give-and-take.

# 5) CREATE AUTHENTIC DISCUSSION

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Try to really get to know each other. Talking about work is only part of the process.

## EMPHASIZE SIMILARITIES.

Find ways to build on existing ties, like a similar job or industry.

## MAKE SPACE FOR FUN.

Networking doesn't have to be serious. It's OK to show your playful side.

## GET PERSONAL.

Be engaged without dominating the discussion. Allow give-and-take.

## ASK CONVERSATION STARTERS

The best discussion topic is one that feels **authentic** to you. Here are some options.

- What do you love about what you do?
- What are you focused on at work?
- What do you wish people knew about your job/company/industry?
- What excites you lately?
- What worries you lately?
- Where is home for you?
- How is your family?
- What brings you joy?
- How are you caring for yourself lately?
- What are you hoping to learn here?



## KEEP GOING

This pocket guide is adapted from a longer piece. Scan below to get the full guide on the SHRM Executive Network website.



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