HOW TO RUN A

SPEED NETWORKING

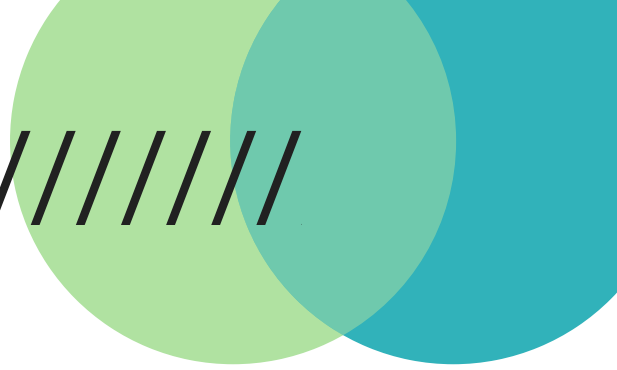EVENT

SPEED NETWORKING

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INTRODUCTION

So, you're ready to host a speed networking event. We're excited to help you along the way! Over the years, we've hosted thousands of speed networking events for corporations, trade associations, colleges, and universities. We've also talked with event planners from around the world who have hosted their own events. As you can imagine, we've heard just about everything —from hugely successful events to horrifying speed networking disasters.

Call us crazy, but we are passionate about what we do and believe that everyone should have the ability to host a successful speed networking event (with or without partnering with us). For event planners who choose to produce their own event (although we hope you consider SpeedNetworking.com), we put together this guide to help you plan and execute a successful speed networking event.

EVENT OBJECTIVE

The first step in hosting a speed networking event is to determine your event objective as it pertains to your organization. Are you hoping to connect like-minded individuals who have similar goals? Do you want to connect buyers with sellers? Are you wanting to pair experienced professionals with those looking to gain knowledge and experience? Determining this is key.

EVENT TYPE

Once you've determined your event objective, it's time to decide event type. Here at SpeedNetworking.com, we typically produce events in one of four formats:

01 **PEER-TO-PEER**
to connect like-minded individuals

02 **BUYER/SELLER**
to match buyers with suppliers

03 **MENTOR/MENTEE**
to pair experienced professionals with those looking to gain knowledge and guidance

04 **GENERAL NETWORKING**
for everything else

Deciding on an event type will help you know how to better plan and facilitate your event so that your attendees are getting the most value.

CONNECTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

As with any networking event, connecting the right people is extremely important. For more intimate events—less than 30 people—it's usually possible for attendees to meet everyone in the room and exchange business cards and decide from there which contacts are worth pursuing further.

For larger events, it becomes trickier. Attendees often have no way of knowing who they should approach in a room full of people – it's all a guessing game. That's where SpeedNetworking.com comes in. Thanks to our advanced matching software, in-person networking can be more strategic, structured, effective, and fun. With the help of our technology, participants can pre-select the types of people they're interested in meeting and be paired accordingly, ensuring the quality of connections is extremely high.

Regardless of whether you choose to use SpeedNetworking.com's match-making software, the following event logistics are a crucial step in ensuring your event is a success.

SPEED NETWORKING

EVENT LOGISTICS

SET UP

Room: We recommend classroom style seating for the best results. This is typically done with 72" x 18" tables and 4 chairs (2 meetings) at each table.

Table Numbers: Our events include customized schedules that direct participants to different tables, which means our events require table numbers. We strongly recommend putting table numbers out in 12" stands, even if you aren't using customized schedules. It makes the event more manageable and you can help direct people more easily with table numbers as guides.

Water: This is an extremely important item to have at the event but is often overlooked. If you can, put multiple water stations around the room for participants to fill up glasses. This typically works better than providing bottles of water ahead of time, as participants often leave these at tables and/or spend time filling up the entire bottle in between rounds.

Audio: For simplicity, we recommend having a wireless microphone for the event facilitator only (with speakers, of course). This enables you to walk around the room and manage the event while on the move.

Video: We discourage incorporating any sort of video/screen at the event. A timer on a video board tends to be distracting, as participants are more focused on the timer than the conversations. It also gives you more control over the event when you can manage the timing. If you need to extend or shorten a round, you can do this on the fly without anyone noticing.

EVENT CHECK IN

Pre-Registered: Our schedules are arranged in alphabetical order by last name, so we can easily find individual schedules when attendees arrive. If you aren't using schedules, print off the names of everyone attending the event (make a few copies) so that you can track who has arrived and who has not.

Info Sheet: In an effort to expedite the check-in process, we hand out a 1-page information sheet to each participant that explains how the event will work.

Mingle: Participants will arrive at different times (typically over a 15-minute time window) and during this time we encourage everyone to mingle with those around them. After all, it is a networking event! Let them know that this is a "bonus round" of networking before the event starts.

SPEED NETWORKING

EVENT LOGISTICS

EVENT FACILITATION

Moderating

Control: As the moderator, it is critical that you maintain control and set the tone for the event. Once everyone has arrived and you're ready to begin, it's important to provide clear instructions/announcements about the event. Give an overview of the structure of the event, objectives (peer-to-peer, mentoring, buyer/seller, etc.), how to maximize the conversations, and what to expect from participating. Try and limit the instructions to 10-minutes.

Commands: One critical element to the success of your event is maintaining control, and as silly as some of the commands below may seem.....you'll be amazed at how well people appreciate structure.

Begin Round x: This signals that the round has begun.

Half Way: Inform participants that they are half-way through each round. This gives them an idea of how much time is left and it also is a signal to allow the other person to have a chance to talk.

30 Seconds Left: Let participants know that the round is coming to an end. At this time, they should begin finishing their conversations and exchanging contact information so they can connect after the event.

Rotate: As you can guess, this signals participants to move to the next round.

Rotation Notes: Remind participants to take their personal belongings with them and quickly move to their next meeting. If you are timing the rotations, let them know when they have 30 seconds and 15 seconds left to finish rotating.

Wrap-Up: Upon completing the event, it's important to provide wrap up announcements. You should remind your participants to follow-up with their new connections to continue building the relationships. Always discourage them from sending a blanket email to everyone and instead, write a personal note to each of the new connections. We encourage you to host additional networking after the event to allow participants to continue their discussions or meet with others that they did not meet during the event.

CONCLUSION

We hope this guide has helped you learn how to run a successful speed networking event! If you're interested in utilizing our matching technology to better connect your attendees—which we strongly recommend for events with over 30 participants—we would love to get in touch to learn more about your organization and unique event needs.

GET IN TOUCH

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