

Issue 11	Women in Biz	Profiles: Entrepreneurial Women	Links	About us and Our Vision	Contact Us
--------------------------	------------------------------	---	-----------------------	---	----------------------------



Ask Jill
By Jill Kanter

Developing Ease at Networking Events

Dear Jill,

I attend a lot of business conferences. While I enjoy the structured educational sessions, I can feel very uncomfortable during the social networking periods. I feel shy about approaching people I don't know and often get a nervous stomach. Sometimes I duck out at the beginning, but I'd rather learn how to deal with this. Do you have any suggestions?

Thanks,
Julie

Dear Julie,

I've worked with many clients who've experienced similar discomfort at business social events—in fact, I think that most people do to some degree. Fortunately there are simple techniques which can greatly increase your ease in such situations. Below are a few suggestions that clients have found particularly helpful:

Identify the behavior targeted for feedback:

- Find a quiet place to take a few moments for yourself before entering the networking event. Take five or six slow, deep abdominal breaths to release stress and restore a sense of physiological calm.
- Become aware of any negative thoughts or self-talk you're experiencing about the situation or yourself. Be a sympathetic listener and also try to reassure yourself that this will be a positive experience that you will actually enjoy.
- As you enter the room, choose to "be the seer and not the seen." Remember that other people also might feel a bit shy or uncomfortable. You can greatly diminish your own anxiety by helping others to feel welcome through your eye contact and smile.

OTHER ARTICLES

- [Personal Vision Planning
http://womenandbiz.com/balance_issue9.html](http://womenandbiz.com/balance_issue9.html)
- [Interview with Lorin Beller](#)

SUBSCRIBE

[Click here to subscribe and receive WomenandBiz.com e-newsletter.](#)

- Remain very present and notice who you feel naturally drawn to approach. You might quietly join a small group of people or introduce yourself in a friendly way to someone standing alone.
- Release any expectations regarding the number of people you think you *should* meet—a meaningful conversation with just one individual can be of tremendous value to you both.

Good luck and try to be patient with yourself. It may take practice to become more comfortable in these situations, but the rewards are well worth the personal investment.

Leveraging Professional Associations

Dear Jill,

I've recently gone through a career transition and am starting out in a new field. I'm planning to join one or two professional associations and want to make the most of it. Can you share any tips?

*Thank you,
Jean*

Dear Jean,

Congratulations on your new career! Professional associations can be a very fruitful means of making new contacts. Here are a few ideas to help you leverage your efforts:

- Choose the right association to achieve your specific goals. Do you want to meet colleagues in your new field to gain professional development and support? Or are you more interested in networking with people in your new customer base? You may want to check with other colleagues to learn which associations are the most respected in your field.
- Commit to *active* participation and consistently attend meetings and special events.
- Invest the time and energy to get to know others. Try to schedule one-on-one networking meetings with people you enjoy speaking with at programs. Begin to develop relationships with people who can support your professional goals.
- Request a list of the association's committees and identify a few you might like to join. Consider criteria such as your interest in the committee's charter, as well as the potential professional benefit of getting to know its members. Try to meet individually with the chairperson of each of your potential choices to learn more about what's involved.

Active participation in associations can be extremely fulfilling both personally and professionally. Best wishes for success in building your new network!

If you have a question about a leadership or team issue in the workplace, please write to AskJill@womenandbiz.com.

Jill Kanter is a management consultant, speaker and writer with expertise in leadership development, team effectiveness and organizational change. She brings a strong practical approach and highly developed intuition to projects incorporating executive coaching, team development, workplace improvement and career empowerment.

Jill has worked extensively with clients in large, dynamic organizations in the financial services, hospital/healthcare, telecommunications and high-tech industries, as well as institutions of higher education and a variety of non-profits. She founded her firm in 1990, after earning her Ed.M. from Harvard University. You can reach Jill at 617-469-0100 or jdk@jillkanter.com. For more information about Jill Kanter, visit her website at www.jillkanter.com.