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# Handy Networking Guide

Did you ever get the impression that everyone in New Brunswick seems to know each other?

**You wouldn't be far from the truth: in a small province like New Brunswick, it's easy to conclude that people already know one another or are connected via their networks. As a result, networking activities, especially for newcomers, can be intimidating at times.**

**This three-stage Handy Networking Guide is designed to dispel any feelings of insecurity, including the infamous "imposter syndrome"!**

## What is networking?

In New Brunswick, the concept of networking is typically used to designate social and professional gatherings during which the main goal is to meet people and forge closer links around a common theme or issue.

Since the people we know sometimes (or often) play an important role in advancing our careers and leadership trajectories, taking part in networking activities can be a good way to expand our social and professional circles.

**Here are a few hints and tips designed to enhance your next networking experience.**

### 1) WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

When you take part in networking activities, you should expect to meet new people in a semi-structured way, depending on the organization involved or the topic being covered.

**Here are a few ideas for when you're getting ready to attend an event:**

- **Think about why you want to take part and plan your key messages.**
- **Take a look at the guest list (often posted on social media) and do some research on people's professional careers and workplaces.**
- **For ideas on what to wear (professional style or informal), check out photos of previous events.**
- **If you have a specific goal in mind, consider asking to meet specific participants to break the ice.**

If you look up information in advance, it is easier to recognize and understand the social norms associated with each gathering you would like to attend. Each networking opportunity is different: some events are purely professional, while others are more festive. Feel free to direct any questions you may have to the organizer or the person in charge of registration.

## 2 WHO SHOULD I CONTACT ABOUT NETWORKING ACTIVITIES?

There are various places where you can seek out interesting networking activities. Why not **start with associations and organizations that share your interests or values?** For example:

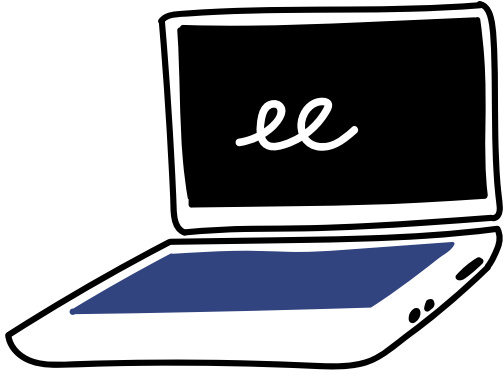
- Community clubs (Richelieu, Rotary, etc.)
- New Brunswick Multicultural Council
- Local multicultural associations (CAFI, MAGMA, etc.)
- Art openings and other artistic/cultural events
- Political/lobby groups and associations

For specific companies and management positions, **some professional networks offer networking opportunities for certain areas of interest, including:**

- Women in Business New Brunswick
- Business Professional Women (BPW)
- Chambers of commerce
- Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick (RFNB)
- Accreditation programs for small businesses (Centre for Women in Business, WBE, Rainbow Certified, etc.)
- Awards and recognition ceremonies in the business community

Volunteering at events in your areas of interest is an excellent way to meet people, promote your leadership skills and expand your network, whatever your career path.

Another way to grow your network and put networking into practice is **to join the board of a non-profit organization.** After you've taken part in the activities and volunteered a few times, you could ask to join the board. This is an excellent way to strengthen your network, gain recognition and hone your skills.



**PRO TIP**

Doing social media research can give us important information on the lifestyles of people we might like to meet at networking events. Having some idea as to their hobbies or interests can be a great way of breaking the ice, provided that you do this discreetly.

### 3 WHAT KIND OF ADVANCE PREPARATION SHOULD I DO?

#### The art of networking is all about small talk!

There is no miracle recipe for being relaxed and getting the most out of networking events. Depending on your personality, networking might always be a bit of a chore. Still, the art of understanding emotional intelligence is a step in the right direction. As a general rule, these events are opportunities to forge stronger social and community connections. Here are some tips for improving your networking experience:

- **Stepping outside your comfort zone, introducing yourself and asking authentic questions will enable you to establish common ground with the people you talk to. Try to focus on personal rather than professional aspects.**
- **During a networking event, it is important to try and meet people whose “intersectionalities” are different from your own. This is an ideal opportunity to step out of your usual network, even if you’re taking part in a group event.**
- **Never underestimate the value of meeting people from other generations, whether they are younger or older than you.**
- **Whenever possible, try to introduce other people during networking events. “Ah, that reminds me, have you met X? You both have this or that in common. Would you like me to introduce you?” Helping to expand other people’s networks usually serves to expand your own network as well. And who knows what inspiring projects could emerge from these new relationships?**
- **Whatever happens, always remain authentic and curious.**



#### PRO TIP

Don't forget to follow up! Collect business cards or put together a phone list so you can send out personalized emails to thank the people you met or to follow up on the discussions you had. Following up is often the most underestimated part of the networking process—yet it's often the one that yields the greatest benefits.