**4 Tips for Making Your Holiday Parties Profitable!**

It’s that time of year again! Time for the annual company or neighborhood holiday party and all the other social events that come with the holiday season. The truth is that these seasonal events are also a great place for networking. And even if you don’t look at them as a ‘networking event,’ you likely will be meeting new people and making an impression in the process. You may as well make the most of it!

*Here are four easy tips for maximizing your interactions at holiday parties this year:*

**1. Have a plan of action before you go.** If you can, find out in advance who will be attending the event. Do some research online and on social networking sites like LinkedIn to learn about attendees and give yourself some connection points with these individuals. (You may even want to consider asking the host for a guest list.) Pick five people that you definitely want to talk to while you are there, and don’t avoid the big names. Challenge yourself by making an effort to connect with the most powerful person in the room.

**2. Let them do the talking (You ask the questions)!** As you meet new people this holiday season, be sure to have more in your arsenal than small talk. But instead of worrying about what you will say – just be ready to ask good questions and listen. Here are a few to get the conversation going:

* Where will you be spending the holidays?
* Where did you grow up? Do you still have family there?
* What are your children up to this holiday season? What gifts are they asking for?

Once the conversation is flowing freely, ask questions that lead to definitive answers:

* What’s the best thing that has happened to your business this year?
* What’s your biggest challenge?
* How do you keep clients happy?

**3. Be prepared to describe yourself in fifteen seconds.** It’s no doubt that you have a lot of qualifications and experience. So much that you could probably go on for *hours* about yourself. But the hard reality is that most people would rather talk about themselves more than listen to you. When you’re meeting new people at this season’s holiday parties, resist the urge to give them a ten-minute introduction about yourself. Instead, prepare a short, fifteen-second description that hits on a few memorable points. Think about what’s unique about what you have done and what will be remembered in a room full of people.

**4. The party may end, but your connection shouldn’t.** Following an event - be proactive. Spend 10 minutes cementing your connections by entering people into your database. Include reminders to yourself of interesting or remarkable things people said so that you won’t forget them and can refer back to them in later conversations. And be sure to use social media to keep in touch. Invite people you’ve met to connect with you on LinkedIn or other social media sites. In your invitation share something the person said to you at the event that will make it personal. And if you can, give them a referral. You will start connections that may turn out to be the best gifts you can give YOURSELF this season.