

Seven Tips for Networking with Prospective Employers ...

The first in a series of Articles that tease out some of the soft skills associated with the Singapore QP Framework.

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Getting Aboard for Lift-Off

You'll complete your degree soon, and are keen on attaining the status of [Chartered Accountant of Singapore](#) professional designation, CA (Singapore). You've been doing your homework on [Accredited Training Organisations \(ATOs\)](#). You know you'll need to join one, and they'll need to select you.

You're aware that the "[Be.Recognised](#)" career fair organised by [Singapore Accountancy Commission \(SAC\)](#) is happening. The fair is a place for prospective candidates to meet and mingle with eager ATOs. You've [registered for the session](#), as you know that lift-off is coming.

A good place to begin this aspirational journey to the heady heights of CA (Singapore), is to work on your soft-side, by developing your "Networking skills". Here are seven simple things to practice, that will give you a better chance of success at the upcoming career fair.

#1: Adopt a Networking Mindset

People adept in networking situations, understand that Networking is not about selling. Feeling you're there to sell, means you'll also fear rejection, which will impair performance. Instead, networking is more about making positive connections, intended to foster collaboration.

You are not attending the fair to "get a job". Rather, you're there to start a conversation, and see where the next step leads to. This is a more purposeful networking mindset to adopt. It will allow you to enjoy the journey, and mix and mingle with ATOs and remain more at ease.

#2: Be Committed, and Show Up

Perhaps as many as one third of people who register to attend a networking event, never show! As networking is all about connecting positively, sharing resources, contacts, and knowledge, it means those absent lose out on both giving and getting.

Standing as you do at your career "ground zero", give it a boost; show real commitment by turning up. Use the time to connect with the opportunities, and keep apprised of potential obstacles to be mindful of.

#3: Consciously Attend to your Body Language

Though you might fear knowing what to say when meeting others, your body has already spoken well before you utter a word! Pay attention to your Non Verbal Communication (NVC), as others are watching it.

Keep a warm smile on your face, and maintain an upright stance. Be careful when seated, as it is easy to slouch into the chair. Keep your hands in front or at the side. Aim to keep them out of the pockets, especially when introducing yourself.

Look people in the eye when talking, and show interest by nodding your head. Whatever you do, keep your device out of sight and mind; show others that you are really interested in them, and what they have to say.

#4: Develop the Conversation

Great conversations happen when two people equally contribute and respectfully share. Listening, asking questions, and contributing ideas are all fundamental in a deeper dialogue.

A short, simple introduction, something prepared in advance, can be a good starting point.

There's also a need to find commonalities. This typically means building on topics that others raise, rather than trying to force your own topic onto others. The former has potential to build rapport, the later, potential to create argument.

#5: Enable Yourself to Circulate

It is important to do a bit of planning beforehand, as time can quickly catch you out, especially when in an absorbing conversation. Make sure that you know who you need to talk with, and how long you'll need to spend with them.

Remember that you are networking. Your aim is neither to get a job offer, nor to get rejected. Perhaps ten minutes is sufficient to make a positive impression, let them discover what they need, and let you to find out what you need too. Be clear on any further action or timeframe.

Be transparent in telling them that you need to circulate, to help them see others too. Make a positive and clear ending. Thank them for their time, and let them know you look forward to hearing back. Move on, taking a few minutes to reflect before meeting the next person.

#6: For Great Networking, Aim to Avoid

Circulating in a group of friends. It limits your ability to meet who you specifically need to meet, takes away your opportunities to ask questions, and limits your ability to make a clearly distinctive impression on them.

Getting locked into your device. Put your phone away, even turn it off. Be socially minded, not mediated. Keep selfies, Facebook and texting for elsewhere - be both physically & mentally present. They are looking to hire your human side, so choose to portray it in positive ways.

Believing you have nothing to say of value. You've already graduated from university, and have earned the right to be there. Use the opportunity to engage in conversation. You have thoughts, share them; you have some gaps, ask questions. Show that you have a human side.

#7: Get Started, by Doing Your Homework

At the heart of the Singapore Qualification Programme, Singapore QP, is a desire to develop the professional people that ATOs seek; people who can add real value to the field of accountancy. And, doing your homework affords you the ability to demonstrate some of the talents they need.

For instance, be clear on what the Singapore QP entails, what ATOs do, ATO differences, relative emphasis on accounts, audit or advisory? These can all be researched ahead. Imagine the positive impression you'll make, when your questions are well formed, and well informed?

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