

THE COMPLETE BEGINNER'S GUIDE

NETWORKING 101

Build real relationships. Create opportunity.
Become a connector people remember.



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WELCOME TO NETWORKING 101

Your network can change what is possible.



Networking is not collecting cards, delivering a sales pitch, or working a room as fast as possible. It is the intentional practice of building trusted, mutually useful relationships over time.

The goal is not to meet everyone. The goal is to build the right relationships-and take care of them.

What this guide will help you do

- Walk into events with a clear purpose and a simple plan.
- Introduce yourself in a way people understand and remember.
- Start conversations naturally-even when you do not know anyone.
- Follow up consistently without sounding pushy or transactional.
- Earn trust, create referrals, and become known as a valuable connector.
- Build a repeatable weekly networking system you can track and improve.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read it once from beginning to end. Then choose one skill to practice at your next event. Use the worksheets, save the scripts, and repeat the 30-day plan until the habits feel natural.

Table of Contents

From first conversation to trusted connection.



01	The Real Purpose of Networking	4	11	Use the Event Playbook	14
02	Set Goals Before You Go	5	12	Practice Group Etiquette	15
03	Choose the Right Rooms	6	13	Network Online and Offline	16
04	Prepare Your Personal Brand	7	14	Network as an Introvert	17
05	Create an Introduction That Connects	8	15	Avoid the Most Common Mistakes	18
06	Start and Join Conversations	9	16	Track Relationships and Results	19
07	Ask Better Questions and Listen	10	17	Your 30-Day Networking Challenge	20
08	Build Know, Like, and Trust	11	18	Conversation and Follow-Up Scripts	21
09	Follow Up Without Being Pushy	12	19	Your Personal Connection Plan	22
10	Give and Receive Better Referrals	13	20	Keep Growing with Tulsa	23

ONE SIMPLE RULE

Do not try to master everything at once. Practice one skill, with real people, every week.



The Real Purpose of Networking



Networking works when people stop treating it like a transaction and start treating it like relationship-building. The fastest way to become valuable is to be curious, dependable, generous, and consistent.

NETWORKING IS

- Building trust before asking for business.
- Learning who people are and what matters to them.
- Creating useful introductions and sharing resources.
- Following up and staying visible over time.
- Becoming someone others are comfortable recommending.

NETWORKING IS NOT

- Collecting as many business cards as possible.
- Pitching every person you meet.
- Expecting an immediate sale from one conversation.
- Only contacting people when you need something.
- Measuring success only by leads or revenue.

Your reputation enters the room before your referral does. Build the reputation first.

The value-first mindset

Before every conversation, ask: How can I make this interaction useful? That might mean listening carefully, offering an idea, sharing an event, making an introduction, or simply remembering what matters to the person. Value does not have to be expensive. It has to be relevant.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

At your next event, make one goal that has nothing to do with selling: learn three people's ideal referrals, introduce two attendees to each other, or follow up with someone you met previously.

Set Goals Before You Go



A networking event should have a purpose. Without one, you may talk to plenty of people but leave without building anything meaningful. Choose a small number of goals you can control.

Relationship goal

Meet 3-5 people you genuinely want to know better.

Learning goal

Discover a new group, trend, business need, or community opportunity.

Giving goal

Make one introduction or share one helpful resource.

Follow-up goal

Schedule one coffee, Zoom call, visit, or second conversation.

THE 3-3-1 EVENT PLAN

- 1 Have 3 meaningful conversations.
- 2 Learn 3 useful facts about the people you meet.
- 3 Complete 1 next step before the day ends.

DEFINE SUCCESS CORRECTLY

A successful event may produce zero immediate sales. If you meet the right person, learn something useful, give value, and create a clear next step, the event worked. Relationships compound after the room empties.

Before-you-go checklist

- Know the event format, location, time, and expected audience.
- Review the host, speakers, sponsors, or attendee list if available.
- Prepare your introduction, your ideal referral, and two conversation questions.

Choose the Right Rooms



More events do not automatically create a stronger network. The best room is one that consistently puts you near people you can learn from, help, collaborate with, refer, or serve.

TULSA NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES MAY INCLUDE

Business networking groups

Structured referral groups, open networking meetups, industry roundtables.

Associations and chambers

Professional, trade, neighborhood, cultural, and business associations.

Community involvement

Nonprofits, boards, volunteer projects, civic organizations, and service clubs.

Educational events

Workshops, panels, conferences, lunch-and-learns, and entrepreneurship programs.

Local gatherings

Coffee meetups, grand openings, festivals, business showcases, and community events.

Online communities

Local groups where members share events, introductions, questions, and opportunities.

Score a group before committing

- Are the people relevant to your goals?
- Is the culture welcoming and relationship-focused?
- Can you contribute-not just receive?
- Will you attend consistently for at least 90 days?
- Does the time and cost match the likely value?

USE GET CONNECTED TULSA

Discover local events, networking groups, organizations, and ways to get involved. Choose one consistent group, one monthly event, and one community activity to build a balanced network.

Consistency beats event-hopping. People refer the people they repeatedly see showing up well.

Prepare Your Personal Brand



Your personal brand is the pattern people remember: what you do, who you help, how you treat people, and whether you follow through. Clarity creates confidence. Consistency creates trust.

Your clarity statement

Complete this sentence:

I help [specific people] solve [specific problem] so they can [useful outcome].

Example: "I help growing local service businesses stop losing leads by building simple follow-up systems that turn more inquiries into appointments."

Your credibility signals

People notice whether your online profile, photo, email, business card, website, and spoken message tell the same story. You do not need to look perfect. You need to look current, clear, and trustworthy.

PRE-EVENT BRAND CHECK

- My name, title, company, and contact information are accurate.
- My LinkedIn and other relevant profiles have a current photo and description.
- I can explain what I do without jargon or a long feature list.
- I know the problems or trigger events that make someone a good referral.
- I have an easy way to exchange contact information.
- I can name one helpful resource or introduction I commonly provide.

BE MEMORABLE FOR THE RIGHT REASON

The strongest personal brand in a networking room is not the loudest voice. It is the person who is prepared, interested, helpful, positive, and reliable.

Write your clarity statement:

Create an Introduction That Connects



A strong introduction is not your life story or service catalog. Its job is to help the other person quickly understand who you help, what problem you solve, and what to ask you next.

THE 4-PART INTRODUCTION

- 1 Who you are: Your name and company.
- 2 Who you help: A recognizable type of customer, organization, or community.
- 3 What you help them do: A clear problem, improvement, or result.
- 4 Conversation bridge: A simple question or reason to continue talking.

EXAMPLE

"I'm Jordan with Greenway Financial. I help small-business owners build benefits and retirement plans that compete with larger employers. What type of work brings you to this event?"

Clarity is more memorable than cleverness.

Three useful versions

10 seconds

Name + business + who you help.

30 seconds

Add the problem you solve, outcome, and a conversation bridge.

60 seconds

Add a short example, ideal referral, and one clear next step.

Write your 30-second version:

Start and Join Conversations



Most people at a networking event are hoping someone friendly will start the conversation. You do not need a perfect opener. You need warmth, curiosity, and a question that is easy to answer.

EASY OPENERS

- “What brought you here today?”
- “How did you hear about this event?”
- “Have you been to this group before?”
- “What kind of work are you involved in?”
- “What are you hoping to learn or connect around?”

HOW TO JOIN A GROUP

- 1 Approach an open group-not a closed circle.
- 2 Make eye contact and listen for a moment.
- 3 Say, “Mind if I join you?”
- 4 Introduce yourself briefly when there is a natural pause.
- 5 Ask a question that includes everyone in the group.

GRACEFUL EXITS

Ending a conversation is not rude when you do it respectfully. Close with appreciation, clarify any next step, and release both people to continue networking.

Exit 1

“I’ve really enjoyed meeting you. I’m going to continue making the rounds, but I’d like to stay connected.”

Exit 2

“Thank you for sharing that. Let’s exchange information and pick this up next week.”

Exit 3

“I see someone I promised to speak with. Before I go, is there anyone here you would like to meet?”

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

Keep your phone away, shoulders open, hands visible, eye contact natural, and expression relaxed. Presence communicates interest before your words do.



Ask Better Questions and Listen



Good networkers are not remembered because they talked the most. They are remembered because they made people feel heard, understood, and valued.

QUESTIONS THAT CREATE REAL CONVERSATION

About their work

What type of customer or project is the best fit for you?

About their story

How did you get started in what you do?

About their goals

What are you focused on growing or improving right now?

About referrals

What usually happens before someone realizes they need you?

About community

What groups or causes are you involved with?

About help

Who would be a valuable person for you to meet?

Use the L.I.S.T.E.N. method

- Look at the person-not around the room.
- Inquire with open-ended questions.
- Stay present instead of planning your reply.
- Take note of names, needs, and next steps.
- Echo back the important point to confirm understanding.
- Next, offer help only when it is relevant.

THE 70/30 GUIDELINE

Aim to listen about 70% of the time and speak about 30%. This is not a rigid rule; it is a reminder to stay curious. Do not turn a thoughtful question into an interrogation-share naturally, too.

Build Know, Like, and Trust



Referrals usually happen after three questions have been answered: Do I know what this person does? Do I enjoy and respect how they show up? Do I trust them with my reputation?

KNOW

Be visible and clear

Attend consistently. Explain what you do simply. Share useful information. Make it easy for people to remember your name and specialty.

LIKE

Be human and interested

Find common ground. Ask thoughtful questions. Be positive without being fake. Support other people's wins.

TRUST

Do what you say

Follow up. Keep confidences. Make quality introductions. Be honest about fit. Protect the reputation of anyone who refers you.

The relationship ladder

- Awareness: You recognize each other.
- Conversation: You understand basic context.
- Connection: You find relevance or common ground.
- Credibility: You observe expertise and consistency.
- Collaboration: You exchange help, ideas, or introductions.
- Advocacy: You confidently recommend one another.

DO NOT SKIP STEPS

Asking for a referral too early forces the other person to risk their reputation before trust exists. Instead ask for a second conversation, learn more, demonstrate reliability, and let confidence grow.

Strong networks are built through small promises kept repeatedly.



Follow Up Without Being Pushy



A good conversation creates possibility. Follow-up turns possibility into a relationship. The best follow-up is prompt, personal, useful, and easy to respond to.

THE 24-7-30 FOLLOW-UP RHYTHM

24 HOURS

Send a short message referencing the conversation and any promised next step.

7 DAYS

Complete the introduction, resource, coffee, call, or follow-up you discussed.

30 DAYS

Reconnect with something relevant: an event, article, introduction, update, or congratulations.

A simple first follow-up

COPY, PERSONALIZE, SEND

Hi [Name], it was great meeting you at [event]. I enjoyed our conversation about [specific topic]. I'm going to [promised action]. I'd also enjoy learning more about [their goal/business]. Would [specific day/time or next step] work?

DO THIS

- Mention a specific detail.
- Deliver what you promised.
- Suggest one simple next step.
- Keep your message brief.
- Add a reminder to reconnect.

AVOID THIS

- Sending a generic sales pitch.
- Adding someone to email marketing without consent.
- Writing a long message about yourself.
- Following up repeatedly with no new value.
- Saying "let's connect" with no action.

Professional persistence adds value. Pressure only adds friction.

Give and Receive Better Referrals



A referral is a transfer of trust. Treat it carefully. Your job is not to pass names around-it is to make relevant, permission-based introductions that improve the odds of a useful conversation.

THE WARM INTRODUCTION FORMULA

- 1 Confirm the need, timing, and fit.
- 2 Ask both people for permission before connecting them.
- 3 Explain why the introduction makes sense.
- 4 Use a group email or message so ownership transfers cleanly.
- 5 Step back, but check later that the connection happened.

INTRODUCTION SCRIPT

[Name], meet [Name]. [Person A] helps [who/how]. [Person B] is currently working on [relevant need]. I thought the two of you should know each other because [specific reason]. I'll let you take it from here.

Teach people how to refer you

"Anyone who needs my service" is too broad. Give your network recognizable signals they can listen for.

Person

Who is the ideal customer or decision-maker?

Problem

What frustration or risk are they experiencing?

Trigger

What event usually creates urgency?

Language

What words might they actually say?

REFERRAL REQUEST EXAMPLE

"A good referral for me is an owner of a growing home-service company who says, 'We're getting leads, but we're not following up consistently.' If you hear that, would you feel comfortable introducing us?"

Use the Event Playbook



Networking improves when you remove avoidable decisions. Use the same simple playbook for every event, then adjust it based on what produces the best relationships.

BEFORE

Choose your purpose and 3-3-1 goals.
Review the event and audience.
Prepare your introduction and questions.
Bring contact-sharing tools.
Arrive 10-15 minutes early.

DURING

Put away your phone.
Start with someone standing alone.
Ask, listen, and take mental notes.
Introduce people when relevant.
Clarify next steps before leaving.

AFTER

Record names and details.
Send follow-ups within 24 hours.
Complete every promise.
Connect people with permission.
Review what worked and what to improve.

Do not leave your next step to memory. Put it on the calendar before the day ends.

Your five-minute post-event review

- 1 Who should I follow up with first?
- 2 What did I promise-and by when?
- 3 Who can I introduce to someone else?
- 4 What did I learn about this room?
- 5 Will I return? If yes, when?

MAKE IT REPEATABLE

Create a reusable event checklist in your notes, task manager, or CRM. Preparation should take minutes-not start from zero each time.

Practice Group Etiquette



Every networking group has written rules and unwritten expectations. Respect both. Your behavior tells people what working with you-and referring you-might feel like.

SHOW UP WELL

- Arrive on time and stay engaged.
- Welcome guests and people who are alone.
- Keep introductions within the time limit.
- Share the room; do not dominate conversations.
- Give credit, celebrate others, and avoid gossip.
- Respect category, confidentiality, and group rules.
- Follow through on referrals and introductions.
- Notify leadership when you cannot attend or complete a commitment.

YOUR 60-SECOND GROUP UPDATE

1. Name and company.
2. Who you help.
3. One problem or success story.
4. A specific ideal referral.
5. A memorable closing line.

Focus on one message. A weekly commercial is not a compressed brochure.

Be a community builder

The members with the greatest long-term influence often do the quiet work: welcoming guests, making introductions, helping the host, sharing events, celebrating wins, and checking on people who disappear.

Welcome

Introduce yourself to one new or overlooked person.

Include

Bring someone into a conversation or table.

Connect

Make one useful introduction during the meeting.

Support

Share, attend, review, volunteer, or congratulate.

The best networkers do not just work the room. They improve the room.

Network Online and Offline



Online networking expands reach; in-person networking builds depth. The strongest system uses both. Let digital touchpoints support-not replace-human connection.

BEFORE AN EVENT

- Follow the host or organization.
- Review speakers and public attendee information.
- Comment thoughtfully on the event announcement.
- Send a short note to someone you hope to meet.
- Update your profile and contact details.

AFTER AN EVENT

- Connect with a personalized message.
- Engage with relevant posts-not every post.
- Share a useful event takeaway and tag appropriately.
- Add follow-up reminders and notes.
- Invite the right people to future local opportunities.

A simple weekly visibility rhythm

1 useful post

Teach, share a lesson, spotlight a resource, or celebrate the community.

5 thoughtful comments

Add ideas, encouragement, or relevant experience-not generic praise.

3 direct messages

Reconnect with people you know using a genuine reason.

1 invitation

Invite someone to an event, coffee, Zoom, volunteer activity, or introduction.

USE TECHNOLOGY RESPONSIBLY

Store useful relationship notes and reminders in a CRM. Record only relevant context, and never add a new contact to bulk marketing without appropriate permission.

Automate reminders-not relationships.

Network as an Introvert



You do not have to be outgoing to be an excellent networker. Introverts often bring powerful advantages: thoughtful questions, careful listening, preparation, and strong one-to-one follow-up.

Choose smaller rooms

Prioritize roundtables, workshops, volunteer projects, and coffee meetings when large mixers drain you.

Arrive early

It is easier to meet people as the room fills than to enter a crowd already in motion.

Use a role

Offer to greet, check people in, take photos, help the host, or introduce guests.

Set a finish line

Decide how long you will stay and how many conversations will make the event successful.

Plan recovery

Leave space after the event to record notes and recharge before your next commitment.

Follow up one-to-one

Turn brief event conversations into deeper coffee or Zoom conversations.

You do not need to be the most social person in the room. Be the most intentional version of yourself.

Your low-pressure event plan

- 1 Meet the host first.
- 2 Start with one person standing alone.
- 3 Have two prepared questions.
- 1 Aim for three good conversations.
- 2 Take a short break if needed.
- 3 Leave after completing your planned next steps.

REMEMBER

Quiet confidence, reliable follow-up, and genuine interest create more trust than constant visibility without substance.

Avoid the Most Common Mistakes



Most networking mistakes come from being too focused on the immediate outcome. Slow down enough to notice the person, the context, and the stage of the relationship.

Pitching too soon

Ask questions and understand fit before presenting a solution.

Talking too much

Use shorter answers and return the conversation with a question.

Being too vague

Describe a specific customer, problem, trigger, and result.

Failing to follow up

Schedule the action before the details disappear.

Overcommitting

Promise less and deliver every time.

Networking everywhere

Choose fewer rooms and attend consistently.

Asking without giving

Create value before requesting access, favors, or introductions.

Ignoring the room

Welcome new people and avoid closed circles.

Expecting instant ROI

Measure leading actions while trust develops.

Using contacts carelessly

Protect permission, privacy, and the reputation transferred in a referral.

A BETTER QUESTION

Instead of asking, "Did this event make me money?" ask: "Did I meet the right people, learn something useful, create value, and complete the next step?" Revenue is a result. Relationship actions are the inputs.

Your network remembers patterns-not intentions.

Track Relationships and Results



If your contacts, promises, and next steps only live in your memory, your network cannot scale. A simple tracking system helps you be more personal-not less.

WHAT TO RECORD

- Name, company, role, and contact information.
- Where and when you met.
- What they do and who they help.
- Goals, interests, and useful non-sensitive context.
- Ideal referral and people they want to meet.
- What you promised and the due date.
- Next follow-up date and preferred channel.
- Introductions, referrals, opportunities, and outcomes.

MINIMUM VIABLE CRM WORKFLOW

1. Add or update the contact.
2. Record one useful note.
3. Create the promised task.
4. Schedule the next touch.
5. Tag the event or group.
6. Review follow-ups weekly.

A spreadsheet works at first. Move to a CRM when reminders, history, automation, or team visibility matter.

Track leading indicators

EVENTS

Attended: ____

CONVERSATIONS

Meaningful: ____

FOLLOW-UPS

Completed: ____

1:1 MEETINGS

Held: ____

INTRODUCTIONS

Given: ____

REFERRALS

Received: ____

WEEKLY REVIEW

Every Friday, check open promises, overdue follow-ups, people you should congratulate, introductions you can make, and events for the next two weeks.

Your 30-Day Networking Challenge



This challenge turns the guide into behavior. Keep the actions small enough to complete and specific enough to measure. Repeat the month with higher targets once the rhythm is established.

WEEK 1 | PREPARE

- ☐ Write your clarity statement.
- ☐ Create 10-, 30-, and 60-second introductions.
- ☐ Update your main online profile.
- ☐ Choose two events or groups.
- ☐ List 10 existing contacts to reconnect with.

WEEK 2 | SHOW UP

- ☐ Attend one event.
- ☐ Use the 3-3-1 plan.
- ☐ Start three conversations.
- ☐ Introduce two people.
- ☐ Send every follow-up within 24 hours.

WEEK 3 | GO DEEPER

- ☐ Schedule two one-to-one conversations.
- ☐ Learn each person's ideal referral.
- ☐ Share one useful resource.
- ☐ Make one permission-based introduction.
- ☐ Post one helpful local takeaway.

WEEK 4 | SYSTEMIZE

- ☐ Record contacts and notes.
- ☐ Complete every open promise.
- ☐ Review events and groups for fit.
- ☐ Plan next month's calendar.
- ☐ Celebrate progress and set new targets.

Thirty days will not complete your network. It will create the habits that can transform it.

Schedule the actions now. A plan without calendar space is only a good intention.

Conversation and Follow-Up Scripts



Scripts reduce hesitation; they should never make you robotic. Personalize the detail, match the relationship, and keep the next step easy.

First opener

Hi, I'm [Name]. I don't think we've met yet. What brought you here today?

Join a group

Hi everyone-mind if I join you? I'm [Name]. How do you all know each other?

Learn ideal referral

What usually happens right before someone realizes they need your help?

Offer an introduction

I may know someone worth meeting. Would you like me to check with both of you?

End a conversation

I've enjoyed meeting you. I'm going to keep making the rounds, but I'd like to stay connected.

Next-day follow-up

Great meeting you at [event]. I enjoyed our conversation about [topic]. Here is [promised item]. Would you be open to [next step]?

Reconnect later

You came to mind when I saw [resource/event/news]. How is [specific goal or project] going?

Request a referral

A good introduction for me is [person] dealing with [problem/trigger]. If you hear that, would you feel comfortable connecting us?

tone check

Friendly beats formal. Specific beats generic. Helpful beats impressive. Short beats overwhelming. A clear next step beats "let's connect sometime."



Your Personal Connection Plan



Complete this page, put the actions on your calendar, and review it weekly. Your network grows when your intentions become scheduled behavior.

My 90-day networking goal

The people I most want to meet

The three rooms or communities I will prioritize

The value I can consistently give

The words or situations that signal an ideal referral for me

My weekly networking schedule

MY NEXT ACTION

Before I close this guide, I will schedule: _____



KEEP CONNECTING. KEEP CONTRIBUTING. KEEP GROWING.

Your next connection could change everything.

Get Connected Tulsa helps business owners, professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders discover local events, networking groups, organizations, and opportunities to get involved across the Tulsa area.

Level up your networking

Visit the website to explore opportunities, or join the community to connect with local people, share events, learn practical networking tips, and build relationships that help Tulsa grow.

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