

Serious Savvy: Learning to Network with Confidence

By Jennifer Wilson.

In 2010 the [British Columbia Library Conference](#) is taking the show on the road to beautiful Penticton in the Okanagan. Penticton has it all; a thriving art scene, great restaurants, access to trail systems and (of course) award winning wines. With so much to explore it might be a good idea to arrive early and stay late.



Orchards, Vineyards, Lakes and Mountains - Typical scene of the Okanagan. Snow covered mountain is Apex. Photo by Hal Whyte.

The meeting space, [The Penticton Trade and Convention Centre](#), inspired the conference committee to conceive of a new program that allows plenty of time for attendees to mingle in the networking-friendly atrium. A key benefit of conference attendance is the opportunity to meet other professionals. At the 2009 conference Ken Haycock presented the session *Networking Savvy* that provided some tips on how to network without pain. Below are a few key points from the session to help you prepare for 2010.

How to Network without pain

As the Girl Guides say, "be prepared". Before leaving for the conference prepare a 21 second introduction that includes who you are, what you do and an interesting piece of information. Ensure that you have

a number of business cards that feature your name, your current place of employment, your email address and a phone number.

When you get to the conference wear your nametag in a visible location; you will likely need to adjust the strings so that it is easily read. Move into the crowd and start introducing yourself. Assume that everyone else is there to meet others as well. Set a goal for yourself; try to meet one new person at each session or event.

Networking solo

When you first arrive, engage someone else who is alone in conversation. Ask questions, like "what do you like to do?" If your chat is starting to lag say something to keep the conversation going, and follow it up with a question, "and you?" If you are ready to move on, try introducing your new acquaintance to someone else. Make a gentle exit, for example suggesting that you are going to get another cup of coffee.

If you walk up to a group (more than 3 people) count to 28 waiting for an opportunity to contribute to the conversation, or to have someone acknowledge you. If the opportunity does not arise walk away. On the other hand, if you do become a part of the conversation do not change the topic and keep an eye out for other solo travelers; step back and welcome others in.

Networking with a colleague

Introduce your colleague to people that you have just met. Tell stories and praise your partner. If you are at a table, go to where there are people and leave two empty seats between you. Act as a host and introduce your colleague to the people that you are sitting beside. If it looks like your colleague needs rescuing from a situation do it!

7 secrets of successful networking

1. You have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince.
2. Networking is not all about you. It is discovering what you can do for someone else.
3. Introduce your self by name, always carry business cards and give them out.
4. Treat everyone as equals.
5. Give everyone the password to the network: permission.
6. Learn the power of asking questions and use it.
7. Be there and know something.

Make your own business cards to emphasize you instead of your employer

Include:

Your Name

Employer

Email Address

Phone Number

Never leave home without a business card

Establish eye contact, extend your hand, exchange business cards, engage in conversation

Travel in pairs

Work in the pond (networking event) positively

Opportunity is everywhere

Repeat, repeat, and repeat

Keep it going

Jennifer Wilson is an auxiliary librarian with Richmond Public Library.

As the publicity co-coordinator of the conference committee she has already started a countdown to the conference start date (April 22, 2010).

Seriously Entertaining: Learning Through Fun and Games

April 22 – 24, 2010, Penticton



Photo courtesy of Penticton Trade & Convention Centre.

There is plenty of evidence that people learn more effectively when they're having fun whether at work, in an educational setting or at play. Join us April 22-24 in Penticton to learn and have fun with colleagues from around the province.