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## The Savvy Networker

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Whether you're new to face-to-face networking or an old hand at it, you've surely noticed that in [networking](#), conversations matter. It's not necessary or even desirable to cram 30 conversations into a one-hour event. But it's just as bad to be held captive in the corner by a person who can't resist telling you everything he's done since the third grade. When you notice that you're trapped in a conversation that's going nowhere, it's time to bolt.

Luckily, it's not difficult to extricate yourself from a networking conversation gone wrong. "Gosh, I'm so sorry, I've got to make a call in five minutes" is one way to go. Naturally, you're required to leave the event, or at least duck into the hallway, after offering this explanation for ending a conversation. But you can come back! "Forgive me, I see someone across the room I'd promised to chat with" is another good escape route. If you say this, you have to spot someone you know and make a beeline for that person.

Those escape tactics could work if you meet one of the following five networking types.

### The Steamroller

This common character in networking circles will barely give you time to answer the question, "So, what's your name?" If you've got a nametag on your lapel, he or she won't even bother asking. "Hey, Sam, nice to meetcha -- name's Alex Jones. I'm in the printing business, been in it for 30 years -- everything from magazines to brochures to you name it. Some of our customers are X, Y and Z, and I'll tell you, we take care of 'em. We've been here in the city for a hundred years --"

By this time you'll be mentally exhausted just keeping up with the Steamroller's story. Don't feel bad about sidling away from a nonstop talker like this -- the Steamroller has seen it before.

### The TMI Networker

There are those who believe that the personal touch is everything in business. That's OK, but the TMI Networker takes it too far. "You know anything about acid reflux?" is a conversation starter for the TMI pro. "Man, I went to the periodontist today. Unbelievable -- I've got gum disease, and it's no joke, buddy. How about you? How are your gums?"

You can easily be regaled with stories of deadbeat brothers-in-law, unfaithful girlfriends and unfortunate pet accidents if you stick too long with the TMI Networker. The worst part about this person isn't the unsolicited details of his physical, economic, and emotional health, it's the unwelcome inquiries into your own private matters. When you feel the TMI meter pushing past your comfort level, run!

### The Carney

Remember those carneys who used to run the ball-toss, shoot-the-ducks and other carnival games in our youth? For a Carney, every other networker looks like a mark. You won't get more out of your mouth than "Nice to meet you" before the Carney starts into his sales pitch:

"How's your search engine optimization, fella? I'll tell you, it's the key to business today. No kidding -- I just saved a guy half a million dollars, last week. How about you, are you getting the site traffic you need? Let's talk tomorrow, I'll swing by your office. Ten o'clock okay?"

It's next to impossible to explain to the Carney that business networking events are intended to allow businesspeople to meet one another, not to hard-sell services to unsuspecting pigeons. Fly away from the Carney

networker, and warn any friends of your who are present to do the same.

### **The Lamprey**

A lamprey is a sea creature that sticks to larger fish as they swim around the ocean. There are networkers who go to events and find people to stick to, and then won't leave. You find yourself introducing your new Lamprey pal to the next six people you meet, wondering, "When did we get to be best friends?"

Now, I am nothing but sympathetic to folks who find it difficult to strike up conversations with strangers. It's not so easy for many of us, and harder still for people who are shy in social situations. But you did not sign up to be the [networking](#) coach. To shed the Lamprey, you can say, "Excuse me, I've got to have a private conversation" and then go have one. That person could be anyone?-- the bartender may be just the one.

### **The Black Hole**

Some people go to networking events and can't hold up their end of a conversation to save their lives. You'll realize that you're talking with a Black Hole when every conversational overture you make is met with a one-syllable response. "So, are you from around here originally?" you ask. "No," is the answer. "What got you to our city?" "Job." This could be a long night.

Give the Black Hole four to five minutes of your time. Any more would be a waste, because your conversation will move at a snail's pace. Life is too short to spend frantically thinking up questions to ask of a person who dispenses conversation like a gumball machine.

