The Networking Game: Play to Your Strengths!

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You walk into a room of 150 people, most of whom you don't know. You begin to survey the landscape; to see if there's anyone you know. Your blood starts pumping and you get a head rush…

<p align="center">Is this your worst nightmare or your favorite activity?</p>

We know that networking is a key to finding roles, opportunities and often times, friendships. Networking can be a large group setting where you know no one, a small group where the people come together based on a shared goal/content or 1:1 where you have an opportunity to have a deep dive where you speak to someone and really learn who they are.

For me, I LOVE it. I get jazzed just walking into a room. That's because I have the CliftonStrengths Theme of Woo – Winning Others Over. I take it as a personal challenge to use my energy and ensure that I make connections with new people. Some people have the theme of Relator. They have fewer relationships, but they are very deep and connected. When they network, they usually prefer to find 1 person with whom to connect.

So what's the right way to network? There is no one right way. But here are a few helpful hints

1. **Ride the coat tails.** If you are someone who doesn't love the large networking space, find someone who does and partner with them. Chances are that they will start a conversation, and you can get involved at the right time. People with Woo are great at bringing others into the conversation.
2. **Find events that are the right size for you.** If a small gathering works better, check out local associations or events. If a large gathering works for you, look for bigger venues.
3. **Come prepared with topics to discuss.** Part of the concern for many people is that they will be thrust into a conversation and have nothing to say. Having 2-3 topics can help and you can even use the same one with multiple people – they probably won't even know 😊
4. **Network with a purpose.** What is it that you are looking to get from the time networking? Make many contacts for a newsletter? Create an authentic connection at a company you're considering for a role? Someone to speak with about industry trends? If you know what you want to achieve, it'll make it easier to find the right people.

Networking can be fun when done correctly – and correctly means the way that works for you.

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