



## How to “Work the Room” at an Advocacy Event

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Attending a crowded event can be stressful. You are there to discuss an important topic with a VIP and are competing with dozens, or even hundreds, of people for their time and attention. Maybe you are shy or just not feeling particularly outgoing on that particular day. We have all been there, and here are a few tips to help you “work” the room next time you are at a widely attended event.

- **Don’t be late to an event.** If an event starts at 6 pm, don’t arrive at 7 pm. Often the best time to meet your fellow participants is earlier in the event, when it isn’t crowded and people are still coming in. VIPs typically come slightly late to events, for example 30 minutes into a 90-minute reception. By arriving early, you can stake out the best spot to meet the legislator and not run the risk of arriving after they have left. It also enables you to meet with the legislator’s staff member if he or she arrives prior to the elected official.
- **Have an elevator pitch.** When you go, you won’t have a long time to meet with the legislator because they have to work the room. You may get two minutes with them. Make sure to introduce yourself, mention why you are there, and have three lines that will stick in their mind after they have met the others in the line.
- **Remember to have your business cards with you.** Part of the reason you are there is to be remembered and cards are a great way to remind people you met them, particularly the legislator or their staff.
- **Remember to get the cards from everyone.** Be sure to follow up the next day with a note. You never know who you will meet again. This also will allow you to send information on the issue to any new VIP contacts you made.
- **Remember, you are the expert on kidney disease.** Remember that when you talk to the VIP, their staff, and attendees about why you are at the event. Make sure to tell them your connection to the disease and why this is so important to you.
- **Keep moving.** This will allow you to scout out the crowd and see who is there. It will also help you see someone you have wanted to speak with or the people you went to meet.
- **Find the small groups.** Sometimes there is a person, sometimes there are small groups of two or three people. Those are the best conversations to try and enter. Be polite by waiting, don’t barge in, and enter the conversation in a relevant way.
- **Bond with your group.** Finding that connection is really important and small talk can be the key to that. Walk around the event with a smile on your face. Maybe the ball game last night was amazing or something hilarious happened in the news. You can bond over something at the event, such as the food. Show interest in them. Don’t make the conversation about your issue, work, or the weather. You can always plan out a few ice breakers before you go to the event.
- **Be seen!** After you have had your two minutes with the legislator, make sure they see you again during the event. Position yourself somewhere visible when they make comments. Say goodbye when you, or they leave.

Contact Andrew Fullerton at [NKFadvocacy@kidney.org](mailto:NKFadvocacy@kidney.org) if you have any questions or would like to get involved.

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