

Table Talk Tips

1. Prepare. If you can look in advance at who is coming, you can more easily seek out folks you really want to talk to, and ask better-informed questions.
2. Have goals for each networking event. For example, aim to have a brief conversation with at least five new people.
3. Have your “elevator pitch” – a quick summary of what you do and where you see yourself heading – ready in case you are asked about yourself.
4. At the event, prioritize learning about the work attorneys do. Conduct yourself professionally and don’t be afraid to talk about yourself, but don’t be preoccupied with making an impression.
5. Ask questions whose answers you care about. That’s how you learn, and how you come up with good follow-up questions. It also takes the focus away from any anxiety you might have about what to say.
6. Ask open-ended questions. For example, “What do you like about working on ___?” instead of “How do you like ___?” Create the opportunity for the other person to say something interesting.
7. Follow up. Get the person’s business card, make notes of what you talked about, and send a follow-up email promptly if you are interested in talking more.

Questions You Might Ask at Table Talk Events

- What practice areas does your firm have, or what issues does your organization work on? What is your practice area?
- What does a _____ attorney do?
- What made you pick this practice? Did you know going into law school that this was what you wanted to do?
- What do you like about being a _____ attorney? What do you find most challenging?
- Did you start this work right out of law school, or did you start out doing something else? (And if so, what? And how did you make the transition?)
- How did you get your job at _____?
- Tell me about your most interesting current or major cases / transactions. What projects are you working on right now?
- Who are your clients? How directly do you work with them?
- Has your practice/work changed a lot since you started doing it? In what way(s)? How do you think your organization/firm/practice will change in the next few years?
- Can you suggest things I can do during law school if I'm interested in this type of practice/work? (Classes I should take; other activities I should get involved with?)
- What do you think are the most important qualities/skills for someone who wants to do this type of work?
- Is there a certain personality type that is a good fit for this work? Why is that?
- How long would you say it takes to get good at being a _____ lawyer?
- Is your work fairly steady, or does it have a lot of ups and downs? How much control do you have over your schedule?
- Do you work on a large number of small matters, or a smaller number of larger projects?
- Do you work a lot with others or on teams at your organization/in your department, or is your work more individual? Do you work mostly with other lawyers, or do you also collaborate with non-lawyers?
- May I have your business card? Would it be OK if I followed up with you sometime soon after this event?