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Networking – a word we all hear at the beginning of our career that has proven time and time again to be a real asset in the professional world. It is an essential aspect of career development and is critical in any industry, but it is especially important in athletics administration. It involves building relationships and finding ways to connect with others, whether through virtual meetings, in-person interactions, social media, or other means.

While valuable, it is not always an enjoyable experience for some as it requires vulnerability, communication, and open-mindedness. If you're someone who views networking as a challenge, it may be beneficial to learn what style of networking works for you. People approach networking in different ways, and the approach that works best for one person may not be effective for another.

Here are a few of the most common networking styles:

1. The Traditionalist: This type of networker prefers to stick to traditional networking methods. They value building strong personal relationships and prefer to network with people they already know or have been referred to by trusted contacts.

2. The Strategic Networker: Strategic networkers are focused on building relationships with specific individuals or organizations that can help them achieve their professional goals. They prioritize quality over quantity and are selective about who they connect with.

3. The Reluctant Networker: The reluctant networker feels uncomfortable approaching new people. They are more comfortable connecting with others online or attending smaller, more intimate events.

One of the most significant benefits of networking is the opportunity to establish new relationships. Attending the annual NACDA & Affiliates Convention provides a unique opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals who share a passion for athletics administration. These connections can lead to new partnerships, collaborations, and even job opportunities.

As a recent college graduate in the workforce, the opportunity to network has allowed me to create specific and meaningful relationships that will stay with me long into my career. I am currently a protégé in the CABMA Mentor Me program and connected with my mentor just prior to the start of Convention last summer in 2022. We planned to meet in person while attending the Convention which proved to be helpful in adjusting from virtual to in person networking. Through our conversations we were able to connect on a personal level, sharing common interests. It was his motivation and encouragement that gave me the confidence to approach other 'rookies' during the educational sessions – engaging with those at my same table or meeting panelists after they were done presenting.

The work I put into networking pre-Convention and while attending the sessions allowed me to expand my professional circle. I have sent and received postcards from many of my colleagues following last year's event, and after nearly a year of continuing a hybrid networking relationship with my CABMA Mentor I feel ready for the 2023 NACDA & Affiliates Convention. I am excited to reconnect with those I have met and find new ways to connect with the CABMA membership.

Remember, "It is not about what you know, but who you know."



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