

To connect, stop being a one-upper

Resist the urge to compete with people you are meeting for the first time—and focus on connecting with them instead. Here's how:

Don't focus on your own title, credentials or experience. For example, if a new contact says "I'm a marketing manager at XYZ ..." don't immediately respond with "I'm the executive VP of marketing." When you one-up people or try to out-do them, you create distance and hurt your chances of building a relationship.

Take an interest when people share information about themselves. Examples: "How long have you been managing your team?" or "What new and exciting campaigns are you working on right now?" Then you can segue into your own work.

Toss the praise around. If someone mentions a personal hobby or accomplishment, congratulate them. For example, if someone says "I just completed my MBA," don't say "I did that 10 years ago." Or if they comment they're training to run a 5k, don't boast about the marathon you just ran. Simply say "Congrats! That is a great accomplishment."

— Adapted from "[How to Send Signals That Strengthen Connection](https://leadershipfreak.blog)," Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak Blog, <https://leadershipfreak.blog>.