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## Croissants vs. Bagels: Strategic, Effective, and Inclusive Networking at Conferences

by Robbie Samuels

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### 26 Highlights | 5 Notes

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Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 31

Were you inspired by one of the main stage speakers? Tweet at them or send them a LinkedIn message. Ask to meet up while at the conference. I've done this and can tell you it works. I ended up meeting the former CEO of Southwest Airlines by sending him a LinkedIn message during the event.

**Smart advice from @robbiesamuels**

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 32

A couple of weeks before the conference pay attention to the Twitter hashtag for the event. People will start to post and the volume and frequency of tweets will increase as you get closer to the event. Retweet information shared by the conference team and anyone else who catches your eye. Some people are very active on Twitter leading up to and during the event. You'll get on their radar by retweeting their content throughout the event and can reply via Twitter to invite them to meet up.

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Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 34

Host a Private Dinner One reason for reaching out ahead of time is to invite someone to a private dinner you are hosting at the conference. If you are looking to build a stronger professional network, hosting your own event is an option you should not overlook. This may seem like too much work, but the benefits far outweigh the effort. This strategy has been a great way to network for John Corcoran, an attorney, former Clinton White House Writer, host of Smart Business Revolution podcast, and co-founder of Rise25 Inner Circle. John said, "You don't need to be the most connected person in the world to do this. They are not coming just for you. You bring together a group of people, they will come for the group. Start by inviting a couple of people, and pretty soon they'll say, 'Wow, look at all of these different people coming.'"

**Indeed, @johncorcoran is great at this via @robbiesamuels**

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 36

You have the right mindset, you've done some research, and you are committed to attending a particular event. The next step is to draft your follow-up email. Yes, BEFORE you leave for the event, write your follow-up email. Writing your follow-up message will require you to get clear on who you want to meet, either specifically or in general, and what you'd want to talk about with them.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 37

Look for Croissants Since you've done your research you know this is a great event to meet potential clients, meet leaders in your field, or find people to invite to your mastermind group. So now you need to go over and talk to the tight networking circle over there. Yeah, the huddle where everyone is standing shoulder-to-shoulder and no one is noticing you standing nearby. I know, I know—not easy to do. Okay, so before trying to tackle one of those hard to break into networking circles (which I call “bagels”), look for groups with a bit of an opening. Those are the “croissants” you are seeking so you can more easily join their conversation.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 45

If a session isn't meeting your needs go to a different one. If nothing else seems interesting, go to the hotel lobby to see who's available for a chat. I've found myself in wonderful conversations this way and learned things I could put into practice when I got home. Learning doesn't exist just within the breakout sessions. Your colleagues are incredibly resource-rich and knowledgeable.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 47

The ABCs of Business Cards Always. Bring. Cards. Even in the age of smartphones and apps, business cards are a critical tool for networking.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 57

It's important to keep these interactions upbeat and resist the temptation to connect through complaining. While it's common to complain about the weather, traffic, sports, politics, or the stock market, these are not great opening lines, as they tend to result in rote replies. If done in excess, you will be pegged as a downer, and no one wants to hang out with a complainer. Instead, use this as an opportunity to make a positive observation or ask a question about the food or drink in front of you—just something small to get a conversation started with someone standing near you.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 60

If you are going to go through the effort to leave your house, get nicely dressed and all made up, and find your way to the event, make sure people know you were there (and not just because you checked in on Facebook).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 63

“To be interesting, be interested.” —Dale Carnegie

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Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 65

The chances of you walking into a room and selling something to someone you just met are very, very low. People buy from people they know, like, and trust. A thirty-second pitch does not build trust. So take the time to get to know the people you meet, ask them questions, and show genuine interest in their responses.

**Yes, @robbiesamuels**

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Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 71

Work the Line At the end of the session a few people will form a line to speak to the presenter. Out of all the people you might want to meet “spontaneously” at the conference, these people have also selected a session you are interested in and enjoyed it enough to stay after to meet the presenter. This is a great opportunity for you to meet someone with shared interests. Stand off to the side of the end of the line and ask an open-ended question about the presentation. For example, “Those were great examples. Has anyone found a similar outcome when you tried it at your organization?” An outgoing extrovert will respond, and a moment later you’ll be in a conversation with a few of the people who had been waiting quietly in line. Why do this? There is a networking opportunity after every breakout. It could be fifteen minutes in the hallway between sessions, lunch, or an evening reception. Rather than walk out of this breakout session on your own and have to figure out who to speak with once in the hallway, wouldn’t it be better to walk out with someone who just attended the same session as you and liked it enough to stay after to speak with the presenter? Then you won’t have to navigate the coffee break on your own, and you might be introduced to your new contact’s colleagues or invited to join them for lunch.

**Smart from @robbiesamuels**

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 74

Be a Host In the “Be Inclusive” section of this book, I share tips on how to host a table at lunch. This is an excellent way to meet people and saves you from wandering around looking for a table to join.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 79

People do business with people they know, like, and trust. That trust isn’t based on a thirty-second sales pitch.

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Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 93

Let’s revisit what Dale Carnegie said, “To be interesting, be interested.”

**Great reminder from @dalecarnegie via @robbiesamuels**

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 101

Ask to be Introduced If you’re new to a space, a great way to wrap up a conversation is to ask to be introduced: “Do you know anyone here you think I should meet?” This usually leads to some brainstorming. When they mention a specific name, say, “Great. Will you introduce me?”

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 103

It’s a three-step process that needs to be done without interruption. Start by shaking their hand (grip), then with a smile (grin), say something nice (e.g., “It was great to see you here,” “I enjoyed meeting you,” or “Pleasure speaking with you.”), and then walk away (go).

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 107

Schedule an hour within two days of every event or conference to do your follow up. Actually put it in your calendar. Schedule this before you leave for the event so it's already on your calendar when you return to overflowing inboxes and a long to-do list.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 111

She said, "We get about 200 emails a day, but when you get a thank you note that's what stands out. We have to be clever about how we get the attention of our network because they are all crazy busy people."

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 112

Regularly Host Dinners One of my first suggestions in this book was to host a private dinner at the conference. Hosting dinners is a great way to stay connected with people in between events as well. Hosting private dinner parties is a strategy that has helped Dorie Clark, best-selling author of *Reinventing You* and *Stand Out*, build her professional network. By being the convener, she is providing something of value for her guests, a welcoming space where they can meet like-minded people. Dorie very successfully did this when she moved to New York City. In a new city, surrounded by millions of busy, successful people, she began to host dinner parties for up to ten guests. She said, "I love to organize dinners. It's a two-fold benefit—part of it is, I think it's fun for people to go to dinner where they are meeting lots of people, it's high value for them because they're investing a couple of hours, but getting to meet eight or ten really cool people."<sup>16</sup> This networking technique is beneficial for Dorie, not just for her guests: "It also serves as a networking benefit for me, because I have a limited amount of time and often times there is a default in our culture to suggest 'Let's have coffee!' That's the standard thing people will suggest if they don't have a compelling reason to do otherwise. And that's nice, but if I had coffee one-on-one with all the people who wanted to, I would never have any time in my schedule."<sup>17</sup> She would also be highly caffeinated. She said, "Organizing dinner gatherings is a much better way to do it. I'm able essentially to do networking in bulk. Spending a few hours one evening every couple of weeks and getting to see tons of people, plus bringing together people from different facets of my life."

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 119

Twitter is especially useful at large events. It's a back channel where you can listen in on sessions you're not attending, because someone in the session is live tweeting great takeaways. You can also learn about informal socials or pop-up sessions. The people who actively tweet will become familiar to you, and you'll feel like you know them if you meet in person.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 122

Twitter Lists Another suggestion from Tina Capalbo, is to "create a public Twitter list beforehand. Give your list a relevant and appealing name in 25 characters or less, something like: People to Meet at #ConferenceHashtag or Looking Forward to #ConferenceHashtag. When the people you add to your list get notified, the name of your list will help them understand why you connected with them and what you have in common. Curating this list will save you browsing time during the event, reduce feed-noise and distraction, and allow you to focus on

timely conference conversations.”<sup>23</sup> Twitter lists are a great way to stay in touch after the event. Retweet messages that resonate with you to stay connected in between events. This can be especially useful in the few weeks before the next event, so you can remind yourself who you are looking forward to seeing again and get back on their radar.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 131

There are times when you don’t want anyone to interrupt your conversation. Perhaps you finally got some face time with a key influencer in your field and you know others are circling to jump in at the first opportunity to do so. In those moments, your body language should be closed. However, those moments of having closed body language should not be your default. Align your body language with your intentions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 133

**Be Welcoming** If you are in one of those tight networking circles and you see someone hovering nearby, turn to create space for them to join you. If someone approaches your “croissant” and seems hesitant, wave them in. When there is a pause in the conversation, let the newcomer know what you are discussing. “Bob was just telling us about his trip to Alaska.” This gracious gesture allows the newcomer to listen politely and then ask relevant questions.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 141

**Did They Choose It?** These are different than the first examples because the comment is about something chosen, rather than a curious comment or question based on who we are. We don’t choose our height, skin color, accent, or myriad other features that make all of us unique.

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Highlight (Yellow) | Page 156

I design pre-conference webinars to help attendees make the most of the opportunities available at the conference. This includes specific steps to create a strategic plan and tips on how to be effective and inclusive.

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