



### Mastering Professional Networking with ASCOT and CLEAR

How do you feel about meeting new people in a professional setting? Even with my experience and confidence in public speaking, I still find it daunting at times.

How often do you present yourself skillfully in public situations? And what impact would it have if you did it well?

To help myself—and others—navigate professional networking successfully at conferences, work parties, and other gatherings, I developed the ASCOT method.

### Why ASCOT?

Inspired by the prestigious Ascot horse races, where etiquette and presentation are key, this method ensures introductions are memorable, professional, and authentic. The goal is to present the best version of myself while building meaningful, lasting connections.

### Step-by-Step ASCOT

#### A – Acknowledge the Other Person's Presence

I don't blend into the background like a curtain or wallpaper—I step forward, stand tall, and make eye contact. A genuine presence matters. No fake smiles—I engage with warmth, starting with a professional greeting:



"Hello, it's nice to meet you."

I avoid saying 'Hi'—it's too informal and lowers my status. Alternatives like 'Good morning,' 'Good afternoon,' or 'Good evening' work better.

### **S – Shake Hands, Respecting Cultural Norms**

Where appropriate, I offer a firm but natural handshake, matching the other person's intensity.

- No crushing grips.
- No limp, dead-fish hands.
- Keep your hand vertical—neither dominant, nor submissive.
- Shake 3–4 times, then release.

If a handshake isn't suitable, I nod respectfully, keeping my hands at my sides. If I suspect the other person may overstep boundaries, I maintain a 90-degree elbow angle to control my space.

### **C – Clearly Say My Name**

I state my name clearly and deliberately so it sticks.

"My name is Arjen Iwema."

If my name is unusual, I provide a simple reference:

"You can say Arjen like R, and then the Japanese currency, Yen—R-Yen. Arzen is also fine."

I also take the time to listen carefully to the other person's name, repeat it, and remember it.

### **O – Offer Relevant Information About Myself**

I move beyond introductions and provide useful context about why I'm here.

"My reason for being here is to give a training on Building Transformational Professional Relationships. I met your CEO on a plane recently, and she invited me to speak today. What brings you here?"

If I'm attending simply to learn, I own my decision with confidence:

"I decided to come today to learn about advanced professional communication and hear insights from top speakers."

Networking is about exchange, not self-promotion—so I make sure to keep the conversation balanced at 50-50.



### **T – Transition the Discussion**

Networking isn't about one long conversation—it's about making multiple connections. When it's time to move on, I do so gracefully:

"I'm glad we had the chance to connect. I'd love to hear more about your new role. May I give you my business card and connect on LinkedIn? I'd also like to greet a few more people before the session starts."

This keeps things professional, allows both of us to meet others, and leaves the door open for future conversations.

### **Throughout ASCOT, I Stay CLEAR**

To reinforce ASCOT, I also make sure my presence is CLEAR:

#### **C – Clothing & Cleanliness**

I wear fresh clothes I didn't wear yesterday and polished shoes. People notice and remember details.

#### **L – Look & Smell Fresh**

I brush my teeth, wear deodorant, and choose a subtle fragrance appropriate for the setting. No chewing gum while speaking.

#### **E – Easy to Understand**

I project my voice naturally, ensuring I'm loud enough but not overpowering others.

#### **A – Articulate Clearly**

I pronounce every word distinctly, avoid mumbling, and control my pace, ensuring I'm understood—regardless of my accent.

#### **R – Respect the Other**

I engage thoughtfully, respecting professional boundaries and treating everyone equally, no matter their rank or status.

By following ASCOT and CLEAR, I leave a strong, authentic impression and build a lasting personal brand—one introduction at a time.