

# Networking with Technical Peers

## *A Presentation In Five Minutes or Less*

### **Who? Why?**

Technical folks often hang with technical folks. These people are your co-workers, people you meet at IT functions like conferences and MnIPS meetings, and even people you meet on the plane.

They may or may not be able to hire or fire you. But in any event, they can have a big impact on your prospects. You have no way to know what that impact might be. Never assume.

### **See Someone You Don't Know? Introduce Yourself.**

Don't wait for opportunity. The people you don't know offer unknown opportunities. Be forward. In the absence of better openings. "Hi, my name is ..." works pretty well. Social interactions always risk rejection and failure -- get over it.

### **(Active) Listening Leaves a Good Impression.**

Paradoxically, most people are impressed initially if you don't say much (that is, if you ask good questions and listen to their answers). "Active listening" is a simple tool: periodically repeat back to them in your own words the main points of what you heard them say. It is even better if you can add some value of your own in the form of a follow-up question.

### **Be Ready to Describe Your Interests and Your Goals.**

Sooner or later you will probably get to talk about you. Have your self-description worked out (the elevator speech). Concentrate more about the future (what you aspire to) than the past (what you've done). Build bridges -- what that you do is like what they do? How could you both cooperate to achieve something?