

9. *Get unstuck.* Sometimes you find yourself talking to someone who latches on to you and you need to escape. There are tactful exit lines to use: “Sorry, I need to find . . . [the event organizer, ladies room, or the person my friend mentioned would be here]. It’s been so nice meeting you. Have a good evening!”

10. *Exchange business cards* when you have reason to. Write yourself a note on the back of the card reminding you where you met the person and what your intended follow-up action will be. Did you offer to send someone information? Did someone say it was fine to e-mail them to arrange an appointment or referral? Writing a note on the back of the person’s card will help you remember to do the right thing.

11. *Be realistic* about networking. An initial chance meeting will not yield a job offer or a performance opportunity. But it may lead to setting up an informational interview or an e-mail exchange of referrals to other contacts, organizations, or resources. At a two-hour networking event, you should probably expect to talk to five to seven people and maybe have one or two substantive conversations. Networking is not about instant gratification.

12. *Follow through.* If you say you will call, send an article, or leave a message for someone, do so. Your promise and your word need to be good. It’s the mark of a professional.

## Hosting a Brainstorming Party ♦

One other great way to get more out of your network is to harness the brain power of your closest group of supporters. Popular author and career counselor Barbara Sher, who wrote *Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want*, and *Live the Life You Love*, originated the success team approach. This involves forming a career support group that meets regularly, once or twice a month. Members give support, contacts, advice, and hold each other accountable for work they promise to do before the next meeting.

I recommend a variation on this approach: hosting your own brainstorming party. The object is to use the collective brainpower of a group of your colleagues and friends to generate ideas and possible action steps toward a specific goal. Here are guidelines:

1. You will first need a **clear directive**: a specific project for which you want feedback. It might be launching your own performance series or festival. Perhaps you want to book a mini-tour of performances in

your region. You need to have a specific project in mind, clear enough so that your team can generate useful ideas.

2. **Invite five to seven people** who know you well, are supportive, and whose opinions and perspective you value. This group may include people from your inner and intermediate network circles. Include non-musicians—they will offer a wider perspective and diverse ideas. It is best *not* to include your spouse or partner because he or she may inadvertently inhibit the brainstorming. It can be hard for those closest to you to entertain a range of new ideas, because they are personally invested. Most likely, you already discuss your career goals, and the point of the brainstorming party is to gather *new* ideas.
3. Invite your team to your home for a **good meal**, and make it clear in advance that after you eat, your guests will be put to work. A weekend brunch can work well for this. After clearing the dishes, have everyone sit in a circle and get a volunteer to take notes.
4. Remember: there is no such thing as a bad or crazy idea; **all suggestions get written down**. The trick is not to censor or inhibit ideas; let them fly. Suggestions that at first seem impossible or ridiculous often lead to some of the most creative solutions. Don't worry about funding or other practical issues that may stifle creative brainstorming; the important thing is to fire up people's imaginations. Don't interrupt with "Yeah, but . . ." or "I already tried that" or "That would never work." Be quiet and let the ideas flow, even if you have to bite your own tongue. Remain positive and open-minded.
5. At the end of the party, you will have pages of ideas to consider—far more than you can implement. But the discussion should provide you with energy, a fresh outlook, and unexpected leads. Afterward, **send thank you notes** to every member of your team.
6. You will need to comb through your options and think how to proceed. And you may want to enlist the support of your team to **make preliminary project plans**. This can be a great way to launch a new venture.

## Bonus Section: Interpersonal Skills for Ensembles ♦

Because musicians so often play in ensembles, here are some specific recommendations. Whether you are putting together a jazz trio, new music collective, or a string quartet, there are some essential points to consider. In order to launch and manage your group successfully, you need to consider your choice of collaborators, individual and collective goals, and work styles.