

To network or not to network, that is a question

Here it is, mid-March (Pi Day today because it is 3.14) and I haven't been to a single networking event this year. Not a one. I did get to a panel presentation yesterday, but that wasn't a networking event.

Now, I believe in networking and in networking events. It's important to meet people in person, and form relationships. It's good to get out. So the question is not whether to network but where and how.

Here are some factors in deciding:

Who is going. Is there a good chance that you will meet prospective clients, or good resources or just fun people? Is it going to be lots of people you already know? Will it give you a chance to reconnect? You should have a goal in mind when networking. If not, you are just attending an event.

Where and when is it. Is it convenient to attend this event? Will there be parking if I have to drive or is it near a Metro stop? How long will it take to get there? Is it at the crack of dawn or in the evening?

Cost. Some events are free and those you can decide on based on the two factors above, but some events are costly. For example, I got an event invitation for something that is \$49. And it is a breakfast presentation. To me, that is a lot of \$\$\$. Will the cost cover anything other than networking—a presentation or a meal? There's one group I know that gives a percentage of the cost to charity, so there is a feel-good/do-good aspect to paying.

Plenty of notice/time to RSVP. Sometimes you don't have enough notice (as I am writing this I got an invitation for something

tomorrow night—sorry, I already committed to something else).
Sometimes you have to RSVP far in advance.

What are your reasons to attend or not attend an event? I would love to hear what makes it or breaks it for you in the comments.