

Tips for Successful Networking

by Phyllis Sisenwine

You can increase your business in 90 days or less!

We often have more networking opportunities than we realize. Standing in line at the bank, traveling on an airplane or attending a social event are all opportunities to make connections. We are always interacting with people. Of course there are also the structured networking events like business card exchanges and chamber of commerce events where our focus is meeting people.

I've met people who go to networking events frequently and when I ask them how much business they have received from the members they comment "very little". When we talk about their strategy it becomes obvious why they have not been successful. If you're thinking networking doesn't work for me, these ideas can help.

Tools for effective networking

Have a short, informative 30 second commercial. Think of a creative way to introduce yourself, including who you are and what you do. A graphic designer I know says, "I put power in your presentations!". The landscaper says he "gets to the root of the problem." Be sure to practice several different introductions until you feel comfortable with your message.

Buddy network

I went to a dinner recently and during the networking time I saw a woman who had framed a picture for me. I introduced her to people and said what a great job she does with framing. A client of mine was there and she introduced me as a great coach. The point is, that if you can pair up with someone and network together, it's much easier and more effective to talk about one another's strengths rather than only about yourself.

Build relationships

Just showing up month after month at a networking function is not going

to increase your business. Put your attention on your intention. When you go to a networking function, plan the outcome you hope to achieve. Find one or two people at each meeting that you would enjoy knowing. Make a breakfast or a lunch date. Get to know about their business. Ask how you can help them.

Form strategic alliances

Many of my clients have a continuous stream of referrals by building relationships with compatible businesses; lawyers with accountants, writers with graphic designers, stockbrokers with insurance people., etc. Collaboration breeds synergy. It's often effective to do a seminar or workshop together and reach out to both groups of clients and prospects. It's also a lot more fun to work together, to brainstorm and to plan strategies.

Develop a team 100 list

Become a resource for people. As you develop a community of professionals to refer to, you are building your network. Do you know a great lawyer, accountant, chiropractor, writer, or dentist? Tell them that they are on your team 100 list and that you will be giving their name out to your network. You can have a business card case where you keep the people you wish to refer to. Or you can type up a list of your team or referral sources. You can hand this out to your clients and prospects. The people on your list will most likely want to reciprocate and put you on their team. This is a great way to increase your referrals in a very short time.

I recently got a call from someone with a Macintosh computer that needed repair. He had trouble finding someone to go to his office. He called me and I gave him a resource. He was very appreciative and asked how he could help me. If he meets someone looking for a

coach it is most likely that he will think of me and give my name to his network.

Be organized

At a networking function keep your business cards in your left pocket and the ones you receive in your right pocket. Put the date and place you met on the back of each card and any notes to jog your memory in the future. When you get back to your office, enter any potential contacts into your data base.

Acknowledge people

It's important to nurture your network. If you see an article of interest to someone you know, send them a copy with a short note. Just knowing that you're thinking of them is always appreciated. Get involved and create visibility. When you join an organization get involved. Get on the membership committee. It becomes your responsibility to meet and greet all new members. By talking about the organization and not yourself you will build relationships.

Have a positive attitude

If you go to a networking event and you're mumbling about how much you hate networking functions you are going to be unsuccessful and ineffective. If you are thinking that you don't like to talk to strangers and that you hate these things you will have a terrible time. If you can give yourself a pep talk and feel positive about the opportunity to meet new people it will be enjoyable and worthwhile. Plan on making one or two contacts at a networking function by looking for people that you would like to get to know better. Building relationships is the best way to build your business. Referrals will increase effortlessly when you become a **power network**.