

THE ART OF NETWORKING

Networking is a valuable tool to help you develop contacts and grow relationships - not only in a business sense, but in your personal life as well.

What is Networking?

Networking is the art of mingling, connecting, relating and conversing with new people. These people often tend to share a common interest with you, whether that is a business interest or a sporting or social interest.

“Effective business networking is the linking together of individuals who, through trust and relationship building, become walking, talking, advertisements for one another” - Stephanie Speisman (internationally renowned networking specialist and coach).

Where do I start?

- Understand your intent – either from a business or personal perspective, think about what it is you want to get out of meeting new people? How will they help you either personally or professionally?
- Once you’ve pinpointed your intent, identify groups or events that interest you, go and check them out! Pop along and take in the atmosphere to see if you feel a connection. Are they supportive? Knowledgeable?
- Practice your intro lines – not so much that they come out sounding insincere, but just enough so that you can easily and concisely let people know who you are, what you do and what makes you special – your point of difference. You have a one-minute window of opportunity to make an impression when you first meet someone, so make an impact – make it count!
- Trust and authenticity is the key to building successful relationships both in a business or personal scenario. Be sincere.
- Show others you are interested in them – this is art of connecting with others. Ask them open-ended questions that allow them to express their knowledge or opinions, as opposed to a closed yes/no type question.
- Likewise make sure you don’t dominate the conversation with a lot of me, me, me chatter.
- In a business scenario – have plenty of business cards at hand, to pass out to those you meet.
- Work at becoming a trusted resource– become the “go-to” person for others, raising your profile in the process and increasing the strength of your relationships with those who come to rely on you for information or advice – either personal or professional.
- It’s not always about paying money either – many groups are voluntary. In addition to making new friends or business connections, this also raises your profile and shows your philanthropic side.

Now what?

- Follow-up – bite the bullet! Call the person you met or exchanged business cards with and follow-up by expressing the fact you enjoyed meeting with them, and would like an opportunity to catch up again.

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If you have any questions, please call 0800 CHAMBER (0800 242 623).

DATE: MARCH 2015

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2. Lay the appropriate groundwork.

Your proposal will be thrown out unless you've done activities that establish recognition in the mind of the decision-maker. There are two ways to do this:

- Create a public presence. This consists of advertising, social networking, speaking to conferences, publishing whitepapers, and so forth.
- Create a personal presence. This consists of establishing recognition through sales calls, customer meetings, emails, notes, texts, and phone calls. For smaller businesses this is often the route we can 'afford' to take.

3. Brainstorm your proposal approach.

Use these questions to get the discussion started:

- What is the customer's problem or issue?
- Why is this problem important to them?
- What parts of the business are affected by this problem?
- What business goals are not being achieved due to this problem?
- What, precisely, will we propose?
- How will we do this work?
- What proof can we offer that we are qualified and competent?
- How can we demonstrate that the value we propose to offer is credible?

4. Write the executive summary.

Contrary to popular belief, the executive summary is NOT a summary of the contents of the proposal. It is a summary of the basic issues, the proposed solution, and the promised results. Effective executive summaries are structured like this:

- Problem, need, or goal.
- Expected outcome.
- Solution overview.
- Call to action.

5. Write the body of the proposal.

The body contains detailed explanations of how you will do the work, the people involved, your prior successful experience you have in this area, previous customers you've help on similar projects, and evidence of your core competency and financial stability.

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In many cases, the customer will have already defined the structure of the proposal or provided a template. If so, follow that structure *exactly*.

6. Mercilessly edit the whole thing.

Appearance is as important as content. There should be no obvious grammatical errors and an absolute minimum of typo errors.

SO.... hopefully this has helped you to write your next winning proposal!

Look forward to talking again next month! In the interim, feel free to email me if you have any questions or queries about your marketing or new business activities.

Have a successful SALES month,

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