

9 ways to improve your networking results

Despite the onslaught of social media and on line networking, 'real life' networking is still a crucial element of many companies' sales and marketing strategies. Quite right too - there are massive benefits to be had from attending networking events.

Providing you're at the right event for you. Providing you do it well.

Sadly many choose the wrong events. Many others, even if they've chosen the right event, often don't make the best of it once there. And I believe this is down to a lack of 'know how' around networking – and crucially a lack of confidence.

My take...

Networking should be fun. Networking should be of immense value to you. Here are a few thoughts on how to get more out of your networking...

- **Choose your networking events carefully** – Ask yourself where you will meet the people you'd like to trade with. Or maybe you'd like to meet those who know the people you'd like to trade with? So could it be the Chamber of commerce? Breakfast clubs? Entrepreneur organisations? Training courses? Charity events? Trade associations? Exhibitions? Private clubs - gold, dining etc? Sports events?
- **Define exactly what you want to achieve** - This will depend on the immediate needs of your business. What are your biggest current and future challenges? This will dictate who can help you the most - and it may not be customers. Decide who can help you.
- **Decide to meet those people you don't already know** - It's tempting to head for those people there that you already know. Yet if you really want to get the greatest value, make sure you spend the vast majority of your networking time with people you don't know. More challenging? Possibly. More rewarding? Definitely!



- **Wear your name badge on your right** - Most people are right handed so when you extend your right hand out it's a short and easy journey for their eyes to make up to your name badge. It helps them remember you and your name.
- **When introducing yourself** - look at their name badge and say something like **"hello xxxxx, pleased to meet you, what do you do?"** (Appearing suitably curious!) This will open up the conversation and crucially, you get to do the listening and not the talking. This will get you the information you need for you to be exploring, via their answers, how useful a relationship this could prove to be.
- **Make them talk** - If they get in first and ask you what you do, be very pleasant and brief and say **"I'm in xxxxx"** - and then immediately go back with **"and what do you do?"** as in point 2 above.
- **Invite others in** - If you're in a circle chatting and listening and you see someone on their own, beckon them to join you. They could be the golden nugget of a contact that makes the whole event worthwhile!
- **Join in** - If you're looking to join a circle of potential contacts just ask **"do you mind if I join in here"** or similar words you're most comfortable with. In 30 years nobody has said no when I've asked this question!
- **Don't pitch!** - Many people throw a business card at you then launch into a sales pitch. They probably know nothing about you and all they talk about is "I can do" and "we we we" - and "weeing" all over everybody is never good sales practice anywhere!

Until next time

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