

Advanced

Networking Techniques



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Advanced Networking Techniques

Networking is a very good way to build your business. When you network strategically, you will meet many different experts from various types of business and you will also be seen as an expert in your business. This is a win-win scenario because not only can you seek advice from the other business experts, but you can also give advice to those who ask you.

Reasons for Getting Involved with Networking

So, why should you get involved with networking? Here are six key reasons.

1. To seek guidance

There are people in various networks who can offer you guidance in your business and/or career. Getting to know these movers and shakers can truly pay off, both now and in the future. In order to get the guidance you need, you'll need to demonstrate that you are open to direction by seeking advice on small issues.

Don't start right off asking for favors, or bother people for accounting advice who have CPAs and who normally charge for their services. But, do ask for more open-ended indirect advice about different choices you are making in your business.

For example, if you're having a conversation with someone you admire, mention a couple of ideas that you have and how you're unsure of which way to go. Mention solution A and solution B, both of which you've already studied and know either one will work out great. Ask them what they think.

If the advice is good, move with their advice and follow up with a thank you note and information about how well their advice worked for you. You'll make them feel wonderful, and you'll also get to plug your own business at the same time without ever asking for them to do anything that big for you.

2. To find more opportunities

If a business isn't growing, or you're not advancing in your career, then another reason to network is to find more opportunities. When you nurture a network over time, it's only natural for people within that network to mention opportunities to you. It's up to you to either follow those opportunities or not. But, the opportunities will present themselves as long as you've done the work to keep the network well lubricated throughout the years.

Keep in mind that people are chosen more often for jobs through referral and this is true whether you're a business owner, an independent contractor, or an employee. Keeping your network ready for when you need a change is important. Take the time to offer up your skills to volunteer to show your skill level.

3. To get support from peers

Having a strong network will not only pay off during bad times but also during good times such as celebrating winning an award, or even just your birthday or an anniversary of when you began your business. Inviting your peers to a party to celebrate your successes will endear you to your network, and help you talk more about what you do for people within your business.

Do remember that this is not a one-way street. When your peers need your help and support, you should freely offer it. If someone has a baby, gets surgery, wins an award, and so forth, be there for them as you would want them to be there for you. Networks are good for both business and personal reasons. That's why they are called relationships.

4. As an outlet for discovery and professional growth

It can be so easy to get caught inside your own business bubble and forget how important it is to stay open to learning. Networking groups will often have learning sessions that can help you in more ways than one. Go to the events to learn, attend the courses, take the courses, and then report on what you've learned, publically becoming a referral for the person who taught the course or gave the speech.

5. To grow your business

Professional growth is an important reason to join and participate in a networking group. Let's be honest - most people join networking groups initially to grow their own business. But, you have to be careful. No one likes how a "used car salesman" sounds. You don't want to turn off your networking groups by being a sales person.

You don't want to go in blazing and selling. Instead, build relationships and over time your business will just naturally grow due to the connections that you make. People will refer you, and you'll refer them. It will come about rather organically if you do what you're supposed to do and build relationships.

6. To achieve expert status

Another reason to join and participate in networking groups is to elevate your own status to that of expert. You want to be the person that people come to for advice. You can improve your status by volunteering for leadership positions within the group and volunteering to organize events, as well as speak and teach lessons as needed about the things you know about.

How to Network Successfully

Remember that simply going to a networking event and handing out business cards to every single person there won't really work. You want to stand back at first and figure out who are the movers and shakers within the networking group, and then work your way into the inner circle of the group slowly. It's important to tread lightly and not be too pushy. Have a plan going in and you'll build up your status within the group.

You probably already do some networking such as joining groups on Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as other online opportunities. But, did you know that even if your business is 100 percent online you can make your networking even more powerful by attending seminars, hosting seminars and appearing at other live events? Live events are very popular today and for good reason. They work.

There are various types of networking that you can participate in and you'll want to consider participating in them all, because the best thing you can do when networking is to diversify. But, before you do that, just try one new group every three or four months. You want to be sure that you can give all that you have to give and not spread yourself too thin.

Attend networking events online and offline

Look on Google Hangouts for online networking events and online seminars to attend. The ones that allow for questions and answers and participation from others is an important distinction for online events. For offline events, you can try out many different types that are happening in your local area, and attend some bigger events that are happening at destination locations across the globe - as long as they relate to your business in some way.

Look for professional associations

Within any industry there are professional associations. It doesn't matter what type of industry you're in; you can do a quick Google Search and find a professional association for that business. If you're a professional life coach, you can find groups that you can network with, along with seminars to attend for continuing education. It's just the same for virtual assistants, coders, graphic designers, and others. Honestly - anything under the sun can be found. [Quintessential Careers](#) is a great place to locate all kinds of professional associations and opportunities.

Attend in-person networks

One of the most popular and famous is [Business Network International](#) (BNI) but you can find others. Most people are very satisfied with their experiences with BNI, though, so see if you can find one. Bear in mind that it can be hard to be accepted into a chapter because they only accept one business from each type of business. The benefit of this is that you will not have any competition within the group for a business like yours.

Find online networks

Do a search on Facebook and LinkedIn to find some online groups. Ask friends to help you find some networking groups as well. If you really cannot find anything you like, consider starting your own networking group. It may take some time to get members, but there are some advantages of starting your own online networking group. Online networks can be very good for referrals. Be sure to join without spamming a group. Give referrals too.

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Whatever types of groups you choose to take part in, it is important that you know what you're going to do with any particular organization before you even start. Networking properly can explode your business, but networking poorly can be a waste of time - or worse, give you a bad reputation.

To be an advanced networker it's important that you:

→ Start with a clear plan of action

Going to events can be stressful, but you can lessen that stress if you go in with a plan of action. Write a one-page plan before any event. Study what the event about and understand the mood of the event. Each event has its own personality, kind of like social networks do. LinkedIn is buttoned up, while Facebook is more casual. Know your event's personality before you walk through the door.

Practice a few key, interesting talking points that you'll go to when you need something to say and can't think on your feet. When you first meet people, focus only on building the relationship and not on what you can get out of them. People can see dishonesty and desperation a mile away. Remember to make everything about them, and nothing about you. It's just like when you write a sales page. It's all about your audience. In the case of networking, it's all about the individual you are speaking to at that very moment.

→ Be as visible as possible but don't be obnoxious

If people don't know who you are, it will be hard for them to remember you when it comes time to recommend you to someone else. A way to be visible is to ensure that you are always helpful at events, talking to different individuals, and making yourself useful. You owe it to yourself to let people know your story. Without knowing you, how are they to know your business? Therefore, be sure to connect with people at every single event you attend.

It can also help to have some sort of special calling card. Some people swear by always wearing their bright green jacket, or red power suit, or purple shoes. Depending on what your niche is, you might even get away with coloring your hair a bright color, or just a strand of hair. Something that helps you stand out from the crowd and be visible is very important.

Some people hand out special business cards made just for in-person events that are useful in nature, such as a ruler or book mark. Others actually give out their free signed

and autographed book if that is permitted. Whatever you can do without breaking the rules and seeming to be obnoxious, you should do to get noticed and be remembered.

→ **Avoid controversial topics when appropriate**

The worst thing you can do at any event is talk about certain topics that are not good to discuss in mixed company. Each event is different and requires a different type of behavior. In most cases at business events, the topics off limits are religion, politics and money. Naturally, this rule can be bent depending on the event. Keep your eyes and mind open so that you can avoid making a faux pas.

There may even be other controversial topics that you don't want to bring up at a particular event. If you're at an event that is promoting using private label rights (PLR), you don't want to say something negative about the use of PLR. Understand what is expected at each event and stick to that plan of action. Have something you want to speak about to attendees and don't deviate too much from that.

There are times when controversy is good, but it's important that you tread carefully when it comes to that. Perhaps your controversy is really just a funny joke that helps you be remembered.

→ **Give freely of yourself, your time and your expertise**

It's really important to go into networking with a giving attitude. Before you can ever ask anyone that you meet for a favor, you have to do a lot of giving. Try to give at least three times more than you ask for favors so that people don't run when they see you coming. This often happens to multilevel marketers who are taught to push and push. Networking events are not the place to push, but the place to give.

If people view you as helpful and generous, they'll be more likely to not only do favors for you when you ask, but also to recommend you to paying customers. It's important that you give strategically too. If there are people just using you for free advice in your core business area, it's important to set boundaries. Separate yourself from them in as kind a way as possible. Make excuses and be vague, but move on to other contacts to find connections that want mutually beneficial relationships.

It can be very tricky, but you can be sure that the person who is always asking for freebies without any hope of return isn't ever going to help you and more than likely other people have the same issue with them. In any case, don't gossip about the person; just move past them.

Having said that, give freely to your group as a network. Sign up to be a speaker or teach a course in something that demonstrates your expertise. Recruit new members for the group, inviting people that you know who can both gain something from the

group, and give something to the group. Volunteer to host events. Do what you can to promote the group; be an important influence to the membership and you will soon be seen as a mover and shaker too.

→ **Ask for help but be reasonable**

It's important when you ask for advice or help that you approach it correctly. You don't want to expect freebies from people who make their money doing the thing you have a question about. It's okay to ask a couple of questions or ask for a bit of advice, but don't expect free services for the long term. Ask a couple of questions and leave it at that. Always be sure to follow up with a thank you for the help, offering help of your own in return.

You don't want to be seen as someone who won't pay for services rendered. So, it's also important that if you find a professional whose services you can use within the group, you hire them. When people see that you are honest, giving, and aren't a freebie seeker they'll be more likely to give you important business referrals too.

→ **Ditch hidden motives**

Technically, everyone is networking to increase and expand their business, learn something new or move up in their career. But, you need to look through that fact and seek a better reason to network and let go of any hidden motives. Networking will work to open doors for you if you concentrate on the right things like building relationships and not making a sale.

Networking is about the long game and it is something you work on for years to see the biggest results. Everything you do today builds on everything you did yesterday and what you will do tomorrow. Your actions will eventually create a snowball effect that is unbeatable. Eventually, you will be a go-to person within your niche and people will look to you for your expertise.

→ **Seek to build real relationships with people**

First and foremost, networking is about relationships with people. Nothing is more important in life than the people that you know and the people whom you choose to spend time with. As you meet new people in your networking groups, keep track of them by asking for a business card. Ask for some basic personal information about what they do, about their kids, their family, etc.

Write some important facts down about each new person you meet as soon as the event is over on the back of each card, as you remember it. Each time you know that you will talk to them again, read what you wrote to give you some talking points before

the meeting. Then, after each new meeting write down any new information to help you remember. People feel important when you remember them. It will be hard to remember them when you are bombarded with so much new information, though, so definitely keep notes.

You can transfer this information to a contact management system (also called a customer relationship management system) such as [Contactually](#) as well. It might make it easier and more organized keeping all conversations about each person in one spot and accessible from any computer. Even though these contacts aren't necessarily customers at this point, finding a way to organize the information is essential.

As you gather the information, if you know that a connection has a birthday, anniversary or other special day, send them a greeting card. Places like [SendOutCards](#) make it easy. Send personal notes when you see something they wrote or did that you admire. Send sympathy cards if something bad happens. Sometimes it's good to ditch email and get out the old pen and paper to send a really personal note or clipping that you think they'll enjoy for the right occasion.

Reach out and invite some individuals that you want to know better to lunch or choose four or five individuals to meet for a mini-networking event so that you can all get to know each other better. Invite them to a live show, or to a piano bar or something interesting. Send them free tickets to an attraction for a special gift when called for. Reach out to build real relationships and it will pay off exponentially later.

→Never forget to follow up

After any event that you attend and in between events, always follow up with any information you promised you would give someone. In addition, be sure to send a short note about how happy you were to meet someone, sending them your business information again, just in case they did not keep track of you or forgot about you.

A nice note in email or one in a card in snail mail will do great for following up. Consider, again, going the extra mile and sending something through the old-fashioned postal service. Do not add these contacts to your sales lead email list. If they join one of your lists on their own, that is fine. But don't make assumptions and put them on any automated list without their permission. Make all emails you send them unique and personal.

Be thoughtful to the contacts that you meet and realize that they are there for the long term, not for the one-time sale. If you approach networking as a one-time sales event you'll burn out super-fast. If you really want to be successful, memorize and follow these tips for successful networking.

12 Tips for Networking Success

Networking is, as mentioned above, part of the long game. This means that you may not see immediate results. However, what usually happens if you work hard is that when the work you do today starts paying off tomorrow it will snowball. But first you have to do the work today.

1. **Make a list of who you know** – You may be surprised at how many people of those you already know that can probably introduce you to other important people. Starting with who you know, then branching out to new groups is a great way to get started with purposeful networking. The people you know now likely also know about networking groups that you can join.
2. **Separate your list into categories** – You'll need to separate the people you know into groups. Some people are family, some friends, and some are professional. Some will be in all the groups. You want to also rank the people that you know in terms of how much help you think they can provide you in terms of business connections outside of your friends list.
3. **Nurture each network** – As you choose the networks in which you'll be involved, be sure not to spread yourself so thinly that you can't properly nurture them. Networking can be a lot of work. You'll need to stay in contact with new people that you meet and build up the relationship. This can take some time to do because it may require several conversations, emails, and other types of sharing before the relationship is strong.
4. **Update your network on what you are involved in** – One good way of following up with your network is to share what you're involved with. If you have online groups, it's simple to share with everyone in the group what you're doing. Just be sure not to cross over into sales. It's good to be excited about what you are doing. Your network will be happy to know what you are doing, too.
5. **Keep track of everything** – Once you have several networks and individual relationships which you are building, it's important to keep track of what you have done, and what you plan to do. A good use for Google Calendar is to keep an ongoing diary of what you've done, and a schedule of what you plan to do. If you don't schedule follow-ups and planned contacts with people you're trying to build relationships with, time will get away from you and you won't follow through. You can also use a contact management system (see link above) built for networking that enables you to keep all your contacts organized in a way that is beneficial to you. If you keep track of all the conversations you have with each contact as well as schedule future contacts, you'll be more successful.

6. **Be a ready resource to others** – Sometimes the best thing you can do for your network and for individual contacts even if you cannot personally help them with something, is to be a useful resource to them. If someone in the network needs an assistant, know who you can recommend. If someone in the group needs information about a particular topic that you're familiar with, send them your sources. If they need a reviewer for a product, volunteer. If they need a guest article, offer one. If you are good at keeping track of what members of the network do, you'll be able to connect members to other members who have what they want.
7. **Answer your phone and email promptly** – Nothing can be more irritating than to call someone and not ever be able to get connected with them. Try to answer your phone and your email as quickly and as promptly as possible. If you only answer messages at certain times of day, be sure to say so in your messages and inside your emails. The new way of working less is great, but the truth is the early bird gets the worm. Every single time.
8. **Dress for success** – When you go to a networking event, it is important to dress appropriately. It's been discussed before in this report but it is super important to dress in a way that is expected so that you don't put people off. It is okay to stand out in a good way so that you're remembered, but you don't want to look like you wore dirty laundry or that you're showing off too much.
9. **Practice your elevator speech** – You don't want to sound practiced or like a recording when you tell people what it is that you do. But, you do want to practice several different manifestations of elevator speeches based on potential scenarios. You want it to be very natural, but practicing will help because most people are a little nervous and caught off guard at networking events when asked questions. Practice with the type of questions you may have received in the past. When the event is over, make some notes about the types of questions people asked you and work on perfecting your answers for the future.
10. **Give out business cards** – Don't stand there like you're handing out bulletins, giving them out to as many people as possible. Instead seek to give your business cards out strategically, giving them to the right people. Always give a business card to people who ask for one, or people who give you their card. Other than that, only give your card to people that you genuinely want to get to know more about and connect with more or who can offer something important to you in the future.
11. **Try to meet three new people at each event** – Before going to any particular event, if you know who is going make a list of particular people you'd like to meet. By identifying three new people that you want to be introduced to, you can perhaps arrange the introductions in advance. Plus, you can take the time to

learn about them so that you can impress them with your knowledge of their business. If you can't do that, try to meet them when you are there. It is very tempting to stand around the same people at each event, but it's important to branch out and meet new people. But, try to meet specific people in a strategic way.

12. **Follow up** – Whenever you meet someone new, it's important to follow up. You want to drop them an email, call them to invite them out for coffee or tea if they're local and connect outside of the event. Even if you have never met someone in person, if you meet them online through a group and you know you're going through their area, ask to meet for lunch, dinner, or coffee. Then follow up again.

Knowing the right people can push your business to the next level. But, the most important thing is to network for the right reasons, which is to build relationships and help others. The rewards you get from your efforts will be invaluable. At every event you attend, whether it is online or offline, it's important to realize that your interaction with everyone is kind of like an extended job interview. People are always evaluating you to see if you keep your word, if you can walk the talk, and are someone who can help them with their business.

The Next Step

To wrap it up, we've now covered why it's important to network in many different ways, both online and offline. You also know what to do to be super successful with the advanced networking techniques we've discussed. But, learning about them is not as important as doing them. You are now challenged to go find one in-person event that you can attend in the next 90 days, one online event that you can attend in the next 30 days, and one online mastermind group that you can join in the next week.

Only by doing can you perfect your networking skills and take your business to the next level.

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