



Networking One-on-One

So you've joined another organization hoping for great networking opportunities so you can build your client base and generate more business. You're still uncomfortable and not quite sure of your 30 second elevator pitch. When it's time to introduce yourself you say your speech and hope that it sounded professional and that people will rush to you wanting your product or service. Wishful thinking is great, but let's talk reality.

Time and time again we talk about networking to build business relationships, but how much business are you generating from networking? What is the return on the time you spend networking?

Networking is more than just attending a meeting, giving a 30 second elevator pitch and passing out your business card. You network every day, everywhere you go. Carry business cards with you and hand them out. When you do mention your business talk about the type of customer you're looking for and be clear about what you do. The key to networking is to focus on building relationships with those you meet and to keep in touch. Don't just contact them about business, but really take the time to get to know them and send them a mother's day or father's day card, or call them to wish them a Happy Thanksgiving.

I have found that word of mouth is the best networking tool around. I've built my business off of word of mouth marketing and networking is now the icing on the cake, so to speak. People really don't want to know what it is that you do, they want to know what it is you can do for them. How will they benefit from your service or product? Focus on the benefits to your customer by using your products or service.

Some networking meetings or events don't focus on networking at all, just another way to kill time and socialize. Be choosy about the events you attend, not all events are worth your time. When you have the opportunity to talk about your business keep it brief and to the point, again talk about the benefits they will receive from your product or service. Lastly always carry your business cards and make sure they are up to date with your contact information.

One last thing to remember is follow-up. When passing out your business cards and receiving business cards, remember to make notes on the back of them to remind you to follow-up and do so immediately. Always try to follow-up by sending a note or additional information as soon as you can, not a week or two later. You want to reach out to people you've met before they forget who you are and where they met you. Remind them where you met and remind them of your product or service. After a couple of weeks contact them again to see if they could use your product or service or perhaps know of someone who does. Also be sure to remember the product or service they represent and do the same for them, pass their information along to any one you come across that may need their product or service. The goal here is to pay it forward and it will work its way back around to you.

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