

Networking - Like You Mean It

Without much ado we will launch into this topic!

Ask yourself -

Have you done much networking?

Do you feel comfortable going into a room full of people you only half know, if that?

How does it make you feel? Just think about it.

In business – and life- today, there is a **tendency to meet lots and lots of people**, caused a bit by **social media**, where we're told we **need large numbers** of Twitter followers, followers of our blogs, LinkedIn connections and Facebook friends.

In fact, there **are only a few professions where** knowing many, many people in a superficial way can be an advantage. "Maybe if you're **promoting a nightclub....**

For just about everyone else it's a different story.

In this document we will think about what to do when networking.

why you do it and how to prepare

Why it matters how you answer 'what do you do'

how to do it most effectively

We will look at the ELEVATOR PITCH, how to construct it and when to use it.

We will discuss which contacts to follow up and why

IMPROVING YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS

Don't Underestimate the power of networking .

But if you think that it is simply about meeting new people and collecting business cards or 'Liking' someone's page on Facebook or connecting on LinkedIn, you are mistaken.

Business networking skills are something every business person needs to acquire and improve on.

And it isn't only collecting business cards– it requires much more than that. It is **about building and nurturing meaningful relationships** in the entrepreneurial world that will aid your success as an entrepreneur.

So how to improve networking skills? Let's outline the steps to become successful at it:

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHEN YOU ARE MEETING PEOPLE Face 2 Face it's so much harder than on social media -

- Many people don't feel confident with SMALL TALK
- They get nervous
- They go blank on their prepared intro PITCH

THIS IS NORMAL and QUITE COMMON but as business people we need to network.

You might be out of your COMFORT ZONE

Connecting with peers in your own industry or people you know already is the **first step to a networking** strategy BUT meeting people from 'outside' these circles can bring a **fresh perspective** on your business and connections. **FOCUS ON CREATING NEW CONTACTS**

NETWORKING

DEVELOP a PLAN

Don't approach your networking in an **AD HOC way**.

It's NOT AN ACCIDENT THAT YOU ARE THERE

So SET A GOAL for every the event

AT the START OF YEAR – PLAN YOUR NETWORKING STRATEGY

write down some ideas for your own business

At the end of the year assess the success of your plan and how it helped your business.

GET STARTED

Step 1: Identify opportunities.

Ask around and google to see what your PEERS are attending and where?

Can you think of places where you can build good business relationships?

- Who do you want to meet regularly ?
- How often do you want to go to events ?
- Which events do you want to attend ?
- Who do you want to do business with this year ?

Every industry event is a big opportunity to make new relationships, if it is a relevant place with the relevant people, attend it...

WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES, CHAMBERS are good opportunities as well as Networking groups. SCHOOLS, HOBBIES, SOCIAL Events

Step 2: Plan ahead

- Who do you want to meet?
- How do you approach them when you meet?
- What do you want to come up as a result of a meeting?
- Determine the answers to these questions before you take a step.
- Set smaller attainable goals – such as ‘I will meet 3 new individuals at this week’s events’ instead of ‘I will sign three deals with my contacts.’

Step 3: AT A NETWORKING EVENT

- **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR APPEARANCE AND MANNERS** – don’t swear or be too loud
- **First impressions DO MATTER.** Dress appropriately
- **Remember to relax and stand tall.**

You can **project your emotional state without even realizing** it through **nonverbal cues**.

For example, having your **arms crossed can communicate resistance**, whereas open arms make you appear amicable.

Don’t forget to **be mindful of your posture** and how your body language is presented to others.

Step 4: Make it 2 way – essentially, networking is a conversation

Talk, listen, ask questions, understand answers. Remember... faces, names, and something about them. People like to be remembered, to think they’ve made an impression.

Step 5: Get the right mix

Exchange business cards but use them later **for communication** – emails, coffee meetups. **Don’t leave in a box or on the desk – or bottom of your handbag.**

Engage someone to set up a CRM to manage those contacts and e-market to them.

Step 6: If you want to **connect** with someone, **find a way to help that person.**

It's easy to assume that a wealthy and successful contact already has everything he or she desires and wants nothing from the likes of you. If you're thinking that way, get over it. **Listen to them ask interested questions about their life and interests** not just business and you'll find out where you can be of help.

It's **always worth the trouble to find out a contact's desires and concerns.** The chances are high that **you'll be able to find something worthwhile you can offer.**

Step 7: Give before you ask.

Don't launch in asking for business, asking for help or introductions – nothing will put people off sooner. If you **have listened to their story or general conversation** you will know their interests. If you come across an article or something to help them send it freely and they'll be grateful and remember you.

Step 8: Be generous.

"You have to have a generous spirit. You can't operate with the thought of reciprocity and self-interest in mind .

The **greatest networkers genuinely like to help others.** They're always doing it. And if they ever do need anything, people will fall over themselves to help them."

REMEMBER

Networking can help you land new business but don't treat it like work, just to benefit your work.

The real person behind the business is what counts most in networking – and that goes for you too.

SO, WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN SOMEONE ASKS 'WHAT DO YOU DO'?

Why does it matter how you answer the question "What do you do?" when speaking to someone you don't know? **Just think for a second and make a note of what you'd say.**

THE ANSWER IS - because **you never know** when the person you're speaking to turns out to be a **potential customer or referral source.**

- **Focus on and define your pitch well.** We'll talk about how to do that soon.
- **Saying that, It's not always about business talk.**
 - **Networking should be approached with a genuine curiosity instead of being scared of success.**
 - **Remember building a social network that comes from sincere interest.** people are just – people.
- **Don't forget to schedule a follow up.** Make sure that once you exchange business cards and say goodbye, **you should email or call your new contact.** Express appreciation for their time. A good way to reconnect is through **LinkedIn.** But you don't have to follow up EVERYONE. If you really don't feel any connection or actively dislike someone then there is no point. Move on.

SOME QUESTIONS to FINISH UP – what should you remember when going to a network event

- Bring your **business cards** with you.

- **Pay attention to your appearance** because people will be looking at you from across the room. **First impressions count for a lot.**
- Prepare a **brief “elevator speech,”** introducing yourself and your business. This will be especially helpful if you’re nervous about meeting new people.
- **Avoid the trap of spending your time with people you know.**
- **Make an effort to speak to new people.**
- Focus **on what you can do for others,** not what they can do for you.
- **Avoid hard selling.** Be curious about what other people do. Ask questions.
- **Don’t monopolize people’s time.** Remember that everybody is there for the same reason as you: To network.
- When you leave a conversation, **ask for their permission to contact them** and suggest a goal for the meeting.
- Follow Up with genuine intent, remembering what they are interested in and how you can help, not just selling.

AND NOW YOU ARE READY – REGISTER FOR THE NEXT EVENT AND ENJOY!