

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS NETWORKING MORE EFFECTIVE.....(1)

1. Business Plan

Even before you go to a network meeting, have a written business plan.

This should include: What business targets do you want to achieve over periods, say, a month, 3 months, 1 year , 2 years...

What do you need to do to achieve the targets, If you need 1 new customer a month, you might need 5 warm prospects in the period, and to get the 5 warm prospects, you might need to contact 50 people. How many contacts do you need from networking and from other channels (eg. web site, social media) to identify the 50 ?

TIP: ask at least 2 successful business people to comment on your business plan

2. Networking to be only a part of your business development plan.

Having decided you need to make say 30 contacts from networking, how many network events do you need to attend in a month ?

A contact could be someone you have exchanged cards with, or people whose cards you got, and will follow up by email or LinkedIn

TIP: network via LinkedIn and Facebook

3. Choice of networks groups

Many people go to the wrong type of group for their business. (for example: say the typical attendee at a group is a 'one man/woman' size of business, but you are looking for the medium sized company with 15 to 50 employees.) But be careful of the organiser who says " we don't have any/many of that size of business at our group, but our attendees have 'other contacts' ". This is rarely successful and if you want to make contact 'through' a group, you have to be prepared to revisit regularly, get to know the attendees, then work with the helpful ones...

TIP: Be prepared to 'visit' a prospective group, with an open mind..

4. Turn up early / plan to leave late

Turn up 15 minutes before the events starts, and plan to leave 15 minutes after it finishes . You will meet and talk to good networkers in these periods...

TIP: many successful networkers will plan to say up to an hour after the event just to chat to other attendees

5. Your 'Intro' words (one minute or otherwise) ...

Speak slowly and concisely ... too many people mumble ... and smile

State your name, company, and product or service.

Confirm who you are looking for and, try to include a memorable fact

Tip: to improve your communications confidence and effectiveness, plug into the Toastmasters organization..

6. Have props / leaflets / Business Cards

If appropriate, have a visual prop, or sample, to make your 'presentation' memorable.

On the business card, have a note of your business type/service on the front, and possibly a list of services on the back

Tip: Use a memorable prop, or quote a success for your business

7. After the meeting communicate back with everyone there

Use email or LinkedIn or text message to develop your list of business contacts

TIP: Target at least 3 people to have a follow up meeting, over a coffee...

8. Talk to the Group Organiser

Most network group organisers are very experienced in running these events. Ask him/her for any advice on your presentation words, and any other ideas for developing your business.. Say you are interested to return to further meetings, and, can he/she recommend other network groups to attend

TIP: be careful, the organizer needs you as a member, and your fees...more than you need the group

9. Ask about the other person's business..

When talking to another person before or after an event... ask "what exactly do you do ? ", " is there anything I can do to help your business" ? "who are your main type of customers?", "where are your based (live)?"

TIP: Stop thinking about YOU, think about HIM/HER.

10. Following up.

Identify a few people to have follow up meetings with. Have your diary with you
Log all contacts on a system, excel or a CRM system

TIP: not following up is the biggest weakness of Networkers. Set your own target number to meet again

And Finally...

Visit the chosen group(s) again and again ...

Find New Groups

Go to ad hoc events (training courses, one-off events run by organisations and charities)

Drop unsuccessful groups (evaluate your time and money investment)

TIP: When attending groups like a Chamber of Commerce network group, remember that such an organisation will have hundreds of members but only a small percentage might attend the network events. Use your membership to contact all, or the appropriate, members.

Don't be afraid to talk to people who are 'selling' or promoting business building services: (social media, web sites, business doctors/gurus , etc., etc .) You will pick up good tips and ideas... and be prepared NOT to buy anything from him/her.

However, he /she may have something which suits you and your business... .. Contact the most successful business person, or people, you know and ask he/she for advice !!

...and finally, finallykeep looking up and reading about effective networking and social media, you will learn and discover ways that will benefit your business

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