



Networking or Net-shirking?

Are you a consummate networker or does the thought of entering a room full of suits, daunt you? Well whichever category you slot into, there really are 'benefits' whether it be on-line (social media platforms) or face-to-face.

Becoming an effective networker, takes time and you will need a technique, for example how you introduce yourself and your brand with impact.

Networking within social media enables us to build relationships, based on well-presented profiles, testimonials and an overview of the individual, their ethos, expertise, connections and business approach. LinkedIn is a great opportunity for connecting and building relationships with other businesses and individuals. Facebook and Twitter are also useful threads, but have to be maximized appropriately for business use!

Potentially building new business leads on-line is a great way to save time and energy and eventually you can set up a Skype or face to face meeting when the time is right! Never underestimate the contacts you have that you don't have a synergy with, as you can never be really sure of their connections and how they could add value to your brand or that of your employer.

So, looking at face-to-face networking meetings. Would you really take anyone seriously who doesn't:

- A. Bring business cards with them to events, with their name, brand and contact details?
- B. Show any interest in your brand at all but incessantly waffles on about their own self importance and how great their products and services are?
- C. Makes false promises and doesn't follow up after a networking event?

In my experience there are lots of '*Tire Kickers*' out there! The people that fancy a '*jolly*' away from the office for a couple of hours – you've met them, right?
Avoid!!!

They are not there to do business, merely make up a number and eat fine food, have fun and generally shirk!

If you are in business then you will well understand that '*Time is Money*' so even if you are invited to a '**Free**' networking event, before committing you need to calculate your time of getting to and from the event, 2 hours plus attending, getting ready and preparing, time away from your other meetings or workload and fuel costs and potential parking fees!

Doesn't sound quite so 'Free' now, does it?

I am very selective with the networking groups I attend and always request a delegate list in advance as to see others that are attending and who I would like to meet. I can then do a check on LinkedIn as to source more information and send an email to introduce myself in advance, in some cases; alternatively, upon arrival I would ask the organizer of an event to introduce me to an unknown but pre selected contact that could be a potential lead.

Following Up

After a Networking Event, it is imperative that you follow up your new connections, sooner rather than later, with a friendly email or connect on social media platforms as to start building a long term relationship for business. If you don't keep your word, you will not be taken seriously and people move on to other more reliable trustworthy leads – Remember, It's a competitive world out there!

Do Not – follow up by spamming your amazing products and services to potential new leads, (this is networking suicide and the ultimate turn off). It will make you look desperate and no one wants to buy from someone that is overly eager!

Build your new business relationships with professionalism, charisma, and diplomacy and have respect for your new contact.

And remember 'Be Interested', NOT 'Interesting' If someone is boring you to death at a networking event, make a swift excuse then a sharp exit and move on rapidly!

The best networkers are always thinking 'how they can help others' they are also tenacious and consider forming strategic alliances. Joint ventures with others that are in the same or similar field of work increases their opportunities to reach a wider target audience and share expertise....

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