

# The Art of Networking

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In this information sheet, we will discuss the importance of networking to the success of your business. No matter how good your marketing, at the end of the day....people buy from people so your ability to make and nurture new connections is vital to the longevity of your business.

## Introduction

Success in business has always been dependent on relationships. This is as true today as it was in the days of Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People.

Being able to connect with and build effective relationships with people is essential to winning and keeping new business, and one of the best ways to do this is through face to face networking.

Have you ever heard the saying: "It's not what you know, it's whom you know"? That's the premise that networking is built on. Networking is a strategic business activity. It can be fun and it can lead to some great relationships, but sometimes it can seem like hard work. If you approach it from the perspective that every person you meet is a potential source of opportunity, just as you are a potential source of opportunity from them, you will find it very rewarding.

Networking opportunities are everywhere, from formal business gatherings to conferences and sports clubs, there are great networking opportunities everywhere.

## How to prepare for a Networking Event

Networking is a long term investment. Results from networking do not happen overnight, so before you attend a networking event, plan ahead:

- Know your objective before you attend the meeting. Are you aiming to connect with specific individuals? Are you there to get more industry or product information? Maybe you want to practice your pitch for when you are asked; what does your business do?
- Think about the type of acquaintances you want to make. Do not focus on future clients alone. Look at how you can develop your business through people who can offer you advice and assistance, such as PR or marketing consultants, accounting or other professionals.
- Take plenty of business cards.

## Tips for Great Networking

- You have to give before you get. This is a fundamental principle of good networking. Look at what you can offer other people and the benefits will find their way back to you.
- Networking is often less about who is in the room than who they know. Don't dismiss talking to someone you meet at a networking event just because they might not fit your customer profile.
- Be conscious of your body language and conversation. Remember it's not the quantity of the conversation, it's the quality. Listening can be more effective than talking while building relationships.
- When you get home, write reminders on the back of the business cards you have received. For example write where and what the event was, points about the personal interests or partner's name. People will be impressed when you 'remember' such details, and you never know how much influence the partner has when it comes time to make business decisions.
- Great networkers follow up. Following up with people, perhaps over a coffee, or to invite them to another event; this will ensure you are not forgotten and will put you on the way to deepening your relationships. Make sure you have a good reason to reconnect, one that appeals to your new contact and that is not just to give your sales pitch – one sure way to turn people off too soon.
- Don't consider every person you meet to be a direct business contact. However, you never know who their friends are!
- Remember it is a slow process but a rewarding one. Time invested and patience will be returned with quality relationships that enhance your business, and theirs.