

Effective Networking

Networking simply means meeting people who can use you as a contact for help, and being able to call upon them to do the same. It can mean exchanging business contacts, sales leads and resources. For entrepreneurs, it may mean finding sources of new business opportunities. The secret of networking success is simple: Networking must be "win-win," where both parties see the benefits. Since nothing in life is equal, you may give assistance to people who are unable to help you. Other times people will help you and you can't return the favor. Sometimes the results come much later. Rest assured, it all evens out.

From an entrepreneur's viewpoint, the best networking strategy is to attend functions and join organizations where you're most likely to find your best potential contacts. Then simply socialize.

But don't join organizations at random. Evaluate an organization before joining:

- What do the members do for a living?
- Is their daily routine or/and background putting them in contact with the people you need to meet?
- Are the members successful, or do you get that "stagnant" feeling?
- Do the members appear to have a "winning" attitude?
- Is there a true atmosphere of sharing and friendship?
- Are most members negative or positive in attitude and behavior?
- Are they eager to share new ideas, or are they tired people just looking for a place to make idle chatter as they rest their feet?

Make sure to join an organization of useful information sharing. Take some time and pick one good organization. Forget having a wallet full of membership cards: Don't join anything unless you can attend regularly and will make a commitment.

Next, GET INVOLVED! Get known by volunteering and being active in the group; be helpful. Follow through and be sure to do a good job at whatever it may be. Otherwise, you'll lose credibility instead of gaining it. Over a period of time, people will see you as a person who gets things done. You'll be respected for it. If you do this in an organization of potential customers, business contacts will come your way that you'd never find otherwise.

Successful networking requires a determination to meet as many new people as possible -- and that includes walking up to people you don't know and introducing yourself.

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Here are some proven networking strategies for large events where you don't know anyone:

- If you go with someone, split up until the event ends.
- Smile when you walk in the door, and don't stop until you leave.
- Have a name badge made up with your name and company name. Pin it to your right lapel. When you shake hands, it's easy to read.
- As you walk around, make eye contact with everybody. The minute you get a return eye contact, smile, extend your hand and simply say "Hello, how are you? My name is _____. What's your business? At this point, instead of saying what business you are in e.g. furniture making, use a benefit instead e.g. I'm in the business of making homes beautiful. Wait to see how people react to this.

YOU ARE INFLUENCED BY THE PEOPLE YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH

So it is a good idea to surround yourself with positive, successful people!

"I don't have competitors, I have colleagues in my industry, pushing me to be/do better"

For More Information

Internet: www.mindtools.com

Book: Making Contact Barry Siskind
Making A Great Impression: How to Make Your Mark in the
Marketplace Sarah J. Clark