



Networking Doesn't Have to Be Painful

Article from BRAINSBOOK on Networking

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If you're like a lot of people, the thought of networking is about as appealing as a trip to the dentist. Networking is one of those things that you know would be good for your business but you just can't seem to make it happen.

So what's stopping you? Perhaps you are holding on to memories of previous networking attempts that flopped. You may be afraid of being ignored or even worse, rejected. Maybe you're nervous about meeting new people and you don't know what to say. Or you might be worried that you won't come across in an authentic way.

The truth is that networking can be fun and profitable once you know the solutions to overcome the obstacles you are facing. Let's look at five of the common obstacles.

1. NOT KNOWING WHERE TO GO TO NETWORK

Sometimes we are so eager to network that we don't stop to consider whether or not we are investing our energy in the right places.

If you want to grow your business by networking it is imperative that you network with: people who are your ideal clients, people who know your ideal clients, and/or people who do business with your ideal clients.

It's that simple. So before you sign up for your next networking event, ask yourself if it is a good fit for your business. That way you won't be wasting your valuable time.

2. AFRAID OF REJECTION

No one likes to put themselves 'out there' just to be shot down. We all want to be welcomed with open arms and feel like we belong wherever we go.

Here are three tips to overcome the fear of rejection. The first is not to take anything personally (good or bad). The second is to stop making assumptions. Meaning, stop making up stories about why people do, or don't do something. The only way to really find out the truth is to have the courage to ask. And finally, remember that people love to talk about themselves. It's hard to be rejected if you're a good listener.

3. WORRIED ABOUT BEING INTERESTING

Instead of trying to be interestING (focusing on the 'ING') be interestED (focus on the 'ED') in the person you are talking with. You don't have to worry about what you will say (except for your brief pitch which comes later).

In fact, make it a goal to talk as little as possible. I promise you will be remembered as a marvelous conversationalist. Memorize this phrase: 'Tell me more about...' and use it! Just relax, be yourself and listen.

4. FEELING NERVOUS ABOUT ENTERING AN EVENT

Enter the room with confidence, stand up straight and smile. Look for a friendly face and introduce yourself. If you don't see an opportunity to meet someone right away don't panic.

A sure fire way to strike up a conversation is to get in a line (to sign in, for food, for drinks, for the restrooms). You can also approach the person hosting the event and ask to be introduced to someone.

In addition, if the list of attendees is available prior to the meeting you can identify someone you would like to meet and approach someone to ask if the person you are looking for is at the meeting.

5. NOW KNOWING WHAT TO SAY ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Eventually someone will ask you what you do, so be ready! Don't ramble on about how long you have been in business or how your business process works. Do prepare a fabulous, short, and memorable pitch (10-30 seconds long) that clearly communicates what you do and for whom you do it.

It is most effective when you speak in terms of the benefit for the client. You can address the problem or describe the solution. You can start with "I" or say "You know how..." and go on to describe the types of problems you solve.

Here are three examples to get you started:

- Computer Technician: "I rescue stressed-out business owners when their computers crash."
- Change Consultant: "I help ICT companies unite and move forward quickly after a merger." OR "I help ICT companies feel less pain after a merger."
- Professional Organizer: "You know how sometimes mothers have so much going on that they can't find anything? Well that's what I do, I help busy moms get rid of clutter and find what they need fast."

Once you've worked out what you want to say, you'll be eager to answer the age old question: 'What do you do?'

Networking takes practice, the more you do it the easier it gets. Networking is a skill you can build, just like a muscle. Be willing to get into action and do your best.

Stay connected to the benefits of 'getting out there' and meeting new people. Decide to take action and address obstacles as they come up. Follow up and follow through – be impeccable with your word, if you promise something, deliver.

Remember, networking is about building relationships over time. If you don't invest in nurturing and growing your relationships with people in your network, then your network will become nothing more than a list of names in a database.

Expand your life, and your business, by having the courage to face your obstacles and 'get out there' and connect with new people. And most of all, be yourself and have fun.