

**5 Tips**  
*Guaranteed*  
**To Make**  
**Networking**  
**Work**

by

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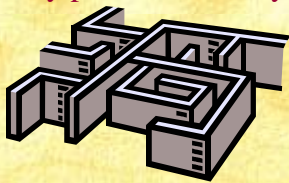
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## 5 Tips Guaranteed to Make Networking Work

### Opening thoughts ...

As a small business owner and coach with lots of experience working with other small business owners, there is no doubt in my mind that networking is the single marketing approach that can produce the biggest benefits to you. There are so many marketing options available to each of us that this part of business often feels like entering a maze. But networking, in my experience, is the one approach that offers a wide array of cost-effective results when used wisely. You'll not only profit financially, but you'll develop strong social capital, your communication skills will improve and you can develop a much better strategic perspective because you have your finger on the pulse of your community.



And like anything else in life, if you aren't paying attention to the right things, networking can seem like a total waste of time. But before we explore tips for making networking work, let's make certain that we are talking about the same thing.

### *What is networking anyhow?*

One dictionary contains the following two relevant definitions:

*Network:* An association of individuals having a common interest, formed to provide mutual assistance, helpful information or the like;

*Network:* To cultivate people who can be helpful to one professionally.

My background in telecommunications has also taught me that a network is about connection: things connected to one another in such a way that information passes both ways, or like links in a chain, so that information eventually returns to the starting point. This is a key concept to keep in mind when thinking about human networking ... a connection that allows for information flow.

Note that nowhere in these two definitions do the words 'sell' or 'selling' appear. One of the biggest mistakes that novice networkers make, in my experience, is that they try to use networking for direct sales (whether selling themselves to a potential employer or selling their products or services to a potential buyer). **If you are using networking as a sales strategy - stop - immediately.** You are turning people off and alienating the very people you hope to be attracting to yourself.

Also note that the term is *network*, not *neteasy* or *netplay*. Now networking can be easy and playful, but it does require some effort, commitment and persistence because truly successful networking is all about investing yourself in building relationships that will be useful to you. Some of these relationships will result in sales, others will provide you with useful insider

information and still others will get you social connection. You have to be awake enough to notice where each person you meets fits into the scheme of things, both in the short term and the long term. People tend to buy from others they like and trust. Focus on building that trust and what you seek is certain to follow!

Not only can marketing feel like a maze that it is easy to get lost in, but networking can be a walk on the wild side to the uninitiated. There can appear to be many false passages and dead ends. But by paying attention to the following tips you'll discover how you can make the process profitable in more ways than generating revenue, as well as highly enjoyable.

## My Top 5 Networking Tips

So listen up folks, here are my top 5 tips to make certain that networking pays the rewards you're looking for!

### 1. *Quit 'doing' - begin 'being'*

First of all, begin to think about networking less as a thing you do and more as a state of being. Networking is really a way of living, a way of engaging with anyone and everyone because you never know who is connected to whom in this world.

*A good name, like  
good will, is got by  
many actions and  
lost by one.*

*Lord Jeffrey*

That old notion of 6's of separation is not just a notion. It is how the world operates! So the kid who packs your groceries, the guy who pumps your gas (if you're like me and still are prepared to pay a premium for service!), that person who handles your dry-cleaning order may be connected to exactly the people who are just waiting to hear about you. Do you treat them all with respect and dignity? Do you let them know what you do and what kind of contacts you're looking for? Treating everyone you meet as a potential source of business means that you can't be one person with customers and another person with everyone else. It means that you must be willing to be authentically who you are at all times. It also means that you must get over any rules and hang-ups you have about sharing what's important to you about life with relative strangers.

### 2. *Be willing to give*

Second, be honest with yourself about what you have to offer to another person. If you are only interested in what you can get out of every interaction it is unlikely that you'll achieve the networking success you seek. ***Great networkers know that they need to give to get.***

What you need to give varies according to the person you are interacting with. Sometimes it is simply recognition that another person exists and makes a difference in your life: a smile, eye contact, really listening as they tell you about themselves. Sometimes it is a willingness to share your knowledge and information. Other times it is a willingness to connect other people with them.

Your willingness to give and share need not be restricted to the specific moment in time you meet someone. I can't tell you how often I've met someone, made a note of a comment they've made in passing and then contacted them weeks later with a relevant article, business card or piece of new, relevant information I've come across. I know that I am building rapport with people and I know that it can pay handsome dividends. Just recently I acquired a new client who came to me through a third-party referral. I've never met this third party but have shared a few supportive e-mails with them and have referred this person to my website which I've designed to be full of helpful information other service professionals can use.

A client was recently bemoaning the fact that she was bored with sending the same old, same old marketing materials to the people in her contact list. She had also commented in the same conversation that she was feeling overwhelmed by the number of newsletters she received. I suggested that she start forwarding some of those newsletters to specific individuals on her contact list because the information that was redundant to her might just make a difference in their lives. At a minimum, by taking the time to forward specific information along, she is showing certain people that she is aware of their needs and sees them as more than a potential revenue source.

*We make a living  
by what we get.  
We make a life by  
what we give.*

*Sir Winston Churchill*

### ***3. Be in the right place***

Thirdly, if you are marketing for business growth, join organizations which have a focus on networking as a key marketing strategy. Pick one that has a meeting format that works for you: time of day, approach to information sharing, rules of engagement, etc. Commit to showing up on a regular basis and being able to complete this statement “the kind of referral I'm seeking

*As soon as you trust  
yourself, you will  
know how to live.*

*Goethe*

looks like x”. Be as specific as you can, e.g. “I'm looking for middle-aged women with a weight issue” or “I'm looking for someone who owns their own business, is successful and is looking for new ways to grow their bottom line”. The more specific you can be about who you're looking for, the easier it is for those hearing you to create an image of someone in their sphere of influence who might be the perfect candidate to match your needs. Remember that people tend to buy from people they like and trust. Allow several months of regular contact in order to build up a reputation as a reliable, responsible service provider.

Be clear that there are many kinds of networking. Find out the purpose of any networking group you are considering joining. If you're looking for business referrals and you join a group whose primary purpose is social interaction, you will be disappointed and frustrated. If you're looking for increased social contact, you may find business development networking groups to be too aggressive, too structured. Certainly people contact needs to be available in any networking situation but making certain that the group's priorities and your priorities are aligned will create far greater success for you.

If you're looking for a job, it is unlikely that a small business development network is going to provide you the results you seek. However, starting to attend industry association networking meetings will bring you in contact with lots of people who have access to the hidden or informal job market.

Here's a short list of places where networking opportunities abound for those of you who are just getting started:

- Trade or Industry Groups
- Professional Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- User Groups/Support Groups
- Business Referral Networks
- General Business Networking Groups
- Cultural Associations
- Sports/Special Interest/Hobby Groups
- Conferences/Trade Shows/Job Fairs
- Volunteer Organizations

#### ***4. Retain control***

Fourth, maintain control of the networking process. When you are in a general 'meet 'n greet session', are at a party or any other sort of event, collect as many cards as possible. Note the date and event on the card; file them in a binder, you never know when they might come in handy. Connect with that person within 48 hours of the event. Offer them something additional in your initial contact: an article, a connection to someone else, or to be put on your newsletter list. Find a reason for staying in longer term contact so that you can show them your reliability, your range of products and services, your willingness to make an effort and your ability to build a case for what you have to offer. Always make it easy for people to opt out of further contact if they don't have an immediate need for your services. It is amazing how they'll remember you in the long term as their needs change when you've given them a graceful 'out' from the beginning.

*In the business world  
the rearview mirror is  
always clearer than the  
windshield.*

*Warren Buffet*

#### ***5. Find yourself interesting ...and invested***

Finally, be willing to invest yourself in staying connected with a wide variety of people. If you aren't willing to do this, be honest with yourself that networking isn't likely for you and find an approach that is more suited to your temperament (for business development - direct marketing, cold calling, web selling; for social contact - clubs, hobby groups, special interest groups, etc.).

Any form of networking requires that you find yourself interesting. Let's face it, if you don't think you're interesting, why do you think that others will find you so? You also need to find

other people fascinating and to temporarily be prepared to step into their world to understand their needs. A friend of mine decided that she wanted to become a professional coach. After several months of struggle and many failed efforts at getting out to meet people she got honest

*Getting ahead in a difficult profession requires avid faith in yourself. That is why some people with mediocre talent, but with great inner drive, go much further than people with vastly superior talent.*

*Sophía Loren*

with herself. She didn't really care if other people got their lives working better ...and she wasn't sufficiently interested in other people to interact with enough strangers to develop a clientele. Armed with this insight, she is now happily involved in a career that has a minimum amount of people contact.

Great networkers have a way of staying connected to a disparate gang of people and are typically interested in a wide variety of people, even if they don't share the same worldview. For example, people who know me know that exercise is probably my least favorite activity in the world. But my networking list is littered with people in the fitness industry because as a life and business coach I am always interacting with people for whom fitness and wellness are

issues they struggle with in life. Because I stay connected with those folks I keep up to date on trends and I can refer clients and other contacts on to professionals who love stuff that bores me.

### Some closing thoughts...

Like anything else in life, networking takes time and effort if you are to be successful at it. However, if you have a bit of computer savvy and a modicum of authentic interest in other people, you can become a highly effective networker without exhausting yourself. I download all sorts of articles I find on the Internet and happily forward them on to people I meet as I go about my life. I write many articles myself and send them along to people as I come in contact with them. I maintain a web-site that is resource rich and is always being up-dated ([www.ouicoach.com](http://www.ouicoach.com)) as well as a blog about retirement lifestyle issues, one of my favorite topics ([www.allaboutretirement.wordpress.com](http://www.allaboutretirement.wordpress.com)) I invest in creating a monthly newsletter that contains useful information as well as marketing materials and I participate in 5 different networking groups on a regular basis.

*The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.*

*Dorothy Parker*

At its roots, successful networking not only requires a genuine interest in people; it is a way of living. Ask yourself:

*Am I willing to give something to get something in return?  
Do I know what I have to give?*

*When I join networking groups do I work their process or complain because my needs aren't being met?  
Am I prepared to invest in long-term connections?  
Do I know what I'm seeking from other people?*

The tips and techniques I've shared in this article are only as valuable as the clarity you have about what networking means for you. There are no absolute rights or wrongs to networking; it really all depends on the inner clarity of purpose you have and the amount of effort you are prepared to invest.

Networking as a way of being has been a part of my life for decades. I can't imagine a life without the large and diverse cast of characters I call into it on an on-going basis. Here's to your successful networking!

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**Gwen McCauley:** educator, coach, artist, author, facilitator and 'employee to entrepreneur' veteran, Gwen brings wit, wisdom and worldly experience to Self discovery as her clients explore entrepreneurial challenges, expanded creativity, career and life transitions, and leadership. Owner of OUICoach™, Gwen is a WEL-Systems® Educator, CODE Model Coach™ and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator. She has a BA in Anthropology and an MA in Human Systems Intervention. Register today for an experience that will change your life!

Gwen published "**The Alchemy of Energy –Exploring The CODE Model™**" in 2004 and "**Sekhmet Rising: the restlessness of women's genius**" in 2006. Her next book "**Splish Splash -- Painting for Personal Discovery**" a primer for budding artists is in development.