

NETWORKING

This is a pack of networking handouts that I have written, adapting both original source material and my own experience. The pack gives people practical tips on how to build and use a network, in order to generate opportunities. Remember that internet sites like Facebook, Linked In and Twitter are also good for networking.

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NETWORKING

THE SMART WAY TO GET AROUND

1. BACKGROUND

A *network* is a group of people who are linked in some way, whereas *networking* is an activity aimed at creating or using a network for some specific benefit. This is an active process which requires active participation. Networking means switching on your network and expending energy to achieve your goals.

The purpose of networking is to generate opportunities by establishing named contacts AND asking them for something.

Networking is more than 'just talking'. To be successful it requires diligence (to ensure all options are considered), patience (as it takes time to build and service) and hard work (you only get out what you put in).

The key attributes and skills to have and use are:

- Active listening
- Asking useful questions
- Presenting information in a concise and interesting way
- Stamina – to keep up with the work

Networking is not magic. People are not born with networking abilities; it is a learned skill.

2. TOOLS

Networking means owning and using a few essential tools. A networking toolbox should include:

- Some business cards or compliment slips, to give to people you meet.
- A snappy 60-second 'marketing minute' to pitch yourself with.
- A snappy 7-second 'elevator speech'.
- A set of useful, purposeful questions to help you start and continue a networking conversation.
- A box or book to keep business cards in, or some other sort of database.

Successful networkers use these tools. People who complain that they are 'no good at networking' tend to have neither the tools nor the confidence to have a go at it. Start small: network with friends first and go to networking clubs; they're a great place to meet people.

3. TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Successful networkers focus their thinking and their activities. They also follow some general guidelines, which can help them to overcome networking 'fear' or 'inertia'. Please consider the following building blocks for success:

1. **Mine your contacts.** "A friend of my friend may know my next boss."
2. **Ask for advice and contacts.** Never ask directly 'can you help'. An indirect approach is always the best way as people will not feel embarrassed if they cannot help you.
3. **Always ask.** If you don't ask then the answer is always *No*.
4. **Tell people that you are looking for something.** A network can only help you if it knows you are actively looking for something. Think of this as *switching on* your network. Ask yourself: Who knows that I am look for something?
5. **Duplicate yourself.** Help yourself by leaving copies of your CV with people, or at least a business card or compliment slip. These will help to jog their memory when you're not around.

6. **Remind people.** Support meetings with regular email-shots and memory jogger telephone calls. Ask yourself: What did I have for dinner a week last Tuesday? You will probably not be able to remember, so don't expect people to remember your precise needs when you're not around.
7. **Practice makes perfect.** You have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a handsome prince – so get kissing. Each frog kissed brings you one step closer to your goal. Ask yourself: How many frogs have I kissed this week?
8. **Be interesting.** People will never remember you if all you say is "I'm a production manager" (yawn yawn). Instead say something like "I used to work with 80 million paperback books, which was a fascinating experience" or "I used to work next to the seaside, which sometimes made me want to bring my bucket and spade to work." As soon as someone asks you a question that means they are interested in you and that your pitch has worked.
9. **Collect business cards.** Always ask for a card, as people often carry them and can forget to hand them over.
10. **Ask open questions.** Networking involves mining information from people and sharing your needs with them. The best way to do this is to ask open questions. These can include:

What does a busy day look like for you?

How do you generate new business?

What do you enjoy about your business?

So, tell me about yourself?

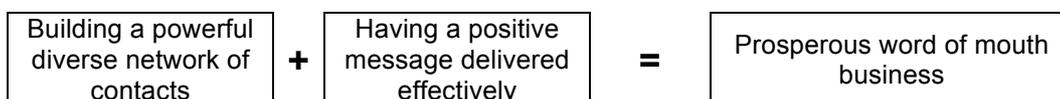
4. HAVE AN OPENING GAMBIT

When networking fails, it does so because people are unable to start and continue a conversation. Networking, as the same implies involves work and the best work you can do is to have an opening introduction which sounds interesting and gives the other person a chance to ask you follow up questions.

This approach is known in the USA as an 'elevator speech'. You have approx 7 seconds in a lift to make an impression between floors. Practice an interesting and enticing one line opener. Instead of saying "Hi, my name's Bob, what's yours?" try something with more sparkle, such as "Hi, my name's Bob. I help people to solve problems." The other person is invited to ask you what sort of problems you solve and before you know it you've walked out of the lift together and are in conversation.

5. FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

According to Ivan Misner, there is a useful formula to use, when networking to build business sales:



Set a goal for the number of contacts you need. Refine your message so it sells your uniqueness. Go out and meet people to build your contacts and get your message across.

Take away message: Networking works if you work the network.

Ref: The World's Best Known Marketing Secret, Ivan Misner 2000.

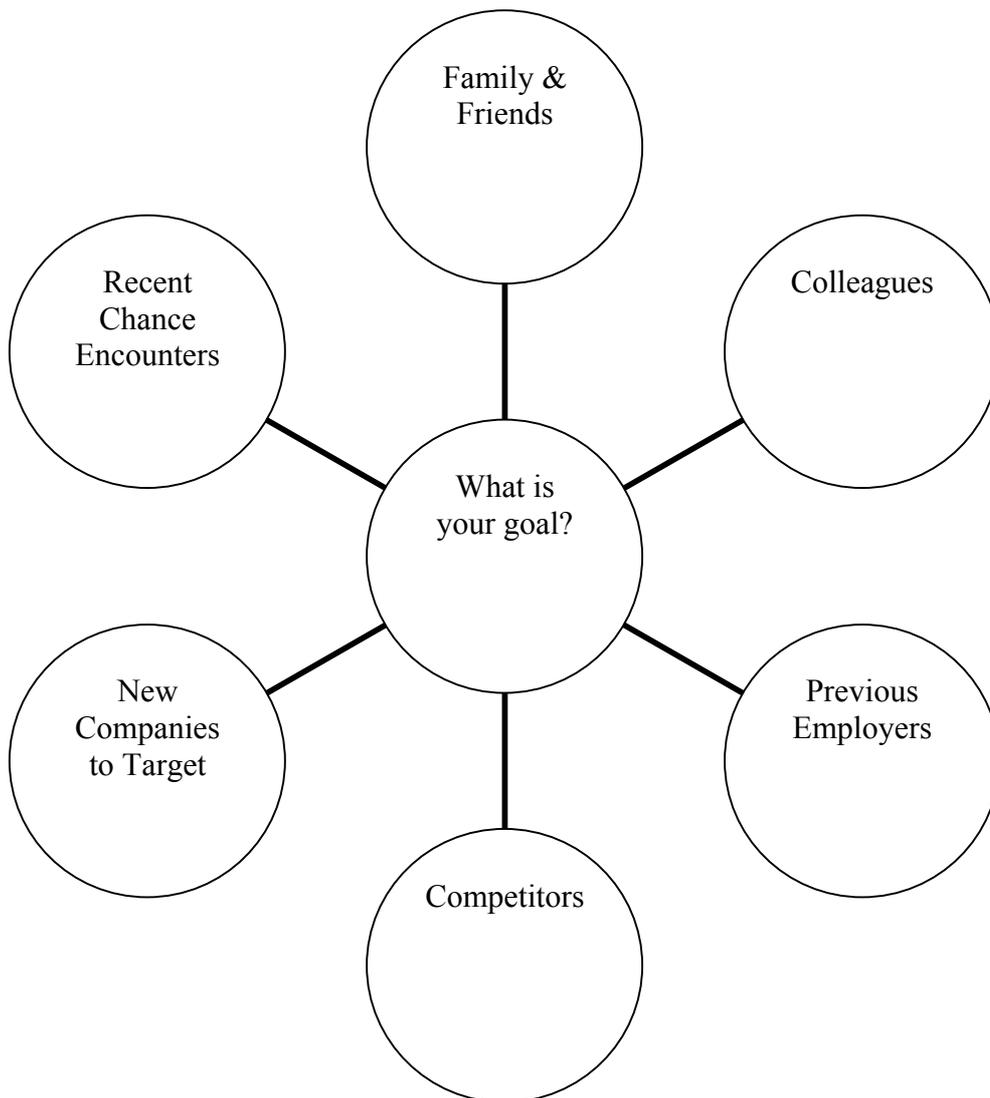
BUILDING A NETWORK

EXERCISE

To be a successful networker you have to have a network to operate in.

If you have a destination in mind it's easier to build a network to get you there.

Write in your goal and then for each category below write in the names of at least 3 people who could help you. Tick each one who knows what your goal is. Who do you still need to network with?



60 SECOND SELLING

A MINUTE TO WIN IT

1. BACKGROUND

A minute is all you need to impart some useful information. People spend too long trying to get their message across and we make up our minds very quickly.

- Have you ever walked into a shop and decided 'on impulse' that the item on sale was perfect for you?
- Have you ever met a person and felt that they were someone whom you 'could do business with' after only a couple of comments?

The chances are that in both cases you took a minute or less to process the relevant information and to make your decision. The same applies when you are networking with people, or selling to them, or being interviewed for a new job.

2. CRAFTING A 60-SECOND PITCH

Using a well crafted 60-second sales pitch is a very effective way to sell. When you have an opportunity to sell yourself, the rule is to talk for exactly 60 seconds and to follow up by asking an open question such as "Tell me something about your business". You can then listen carefully and focus on finding out needs and opportunities.

We talk at a rate of approx 150 words per minute, which is ample time to get your message across, or to talk rubbish and lose the sale. Please take some time to prepare a 60-second sales pitch and to help keep yourself on track you may find the following structure useful:

When introducing yourself to a group, for example to get more business, try this:	
1. INTRO – 20 seconds	Introduce your self – name, company and one sentence summarising what you do / products or services you have to offer.
2. TELL – 20 seconds	Describe your products or services in more detail. Highlight unique points. Differentiate yourself from the competition. Tell a "story" about a project or a particular success, or a satisfied customer. Use numbers to add detail and to be memorable, eg £10m sales or 80m cakes.
3. ASK – 10 seconds	Ask for what you are looking for and be specific. E.g. "Today I am looking for more customers for the XYZ product."
4. HOOK – 10 seconds	Summarise and end with a catchy tag-line. E.g. "I'm Joe Soap from Office Cleaning Corp. Clean up in business with me."

3. HOOK LINES

Keep them short, relevant and memorable. Rhyme words or use phrases that roll off the tongue. Part of Bill Clinton's electoral success was because he hammered home the message that he was "The Comeback Kid". Hook lines work and although you may feel uncomfortable with them at first, they are worth persevering with. A safe option for a hook is to repeat your most memorable fact in 5 to 6 words.

Hooks which are cheesy or naff are better than no hook – if people don't remember you then your marketing effort has been totally wasted.

Take away message: Remember to be interesting, relevant and concise.

BIZZ LIGHTBEER & BARB EDOLL

NETWORKING CONVERSATIONS (With commentary)

Networking is about communicating effectively; which is about combining listening and selling skills. When you're surrounded by people remember the 3-feet rule:

Always talk to people who are less than 3-feet away from you.

Starting a conversation is like playing chess and it helps to think ahead and plan your moves. Please read through this snippet of dialogue from an outtake of:

TOY STORY 9

Bizz Lightbeer goes to Cornfield University and meets Barb Edoll in a Social Club.

- Bizz: Hello my name is Bizz, Bizz Lightbeer. (1) **Always repeat your name**
- Barb: Hi Bizz, I'm Barb, World Class Barb Edoll.
- Bizz: Pleased to meet you Barb.
- Barb: Likewise. So what do you do?
- Bizz: I'm a student here, studying Lean, and before that I used to battle the Evil Emperor Zorg. You know, intergalactic battles, fist fights and the odd alien to decapitate. (2) **Try to say something interesting to give the other person a chance to ask questions**
- Barb: No kidding? Hence the jet-pack and laser beam, I suppose.
- Bizz: Indeed. Would like a drink Barb? (3) **Repeat their name to get it to stick in your mind**
- Barb: Thanks Bizz, I'll have a Redbull and vodka and a bag of pork scratchings.
- Bizz: So classy!* Tell me Barb, how's your day today? Have you been busy? (4) **Ask open questions to generate a conversation**
- Barb: Yes, I have. Too busy really.
- Bizz: What does a busy day look like for you? (5) **Don't let the conversation sag – ask a prepared follow up question**
- Barb: Lots of meetings. And 100's of emails. I'm working on our Third World Debt project. And I'm heavily involved in launching our new range of pink, fluffy accessories. And then there's the 'give puppies a chance' campaign. Lots to do, lots of different shoes to wear. What about you?
- Bizz: Yes, I've also been busy, working on a fascinating consultancy project. It gave me a real insight into the workings of the space port on the planet Kaizen. (6) **Keep your answers short and interesting**
- Barb: Really? What did you do on Kaizen?
- Bizz: We analysed their work flows and then helped them to save lots of time on their interstellar launch procedure.
- Barb: Wow. Ken would be so excited. He just loves rockets.
- Bizz: And I realised that process improvement tools are excellent at solving a wide range of problems.
- Barb: How interesting Bizz. So what's your connection with Cornfield?
- Bizz: I'm currently on a post-graduate development programme. It combines an intensive foundation phase with a challenging twelve month industrial assignment.
- Barb: So, is your assignment on planet Kaizen?
- Bizz: Oh no, that was just a two-day project. And besides, the petrol expenses were a bit steep. No, my long term aim is to secure a Managing Director's position, and my first goal is to update my marketing experience. So right now, I'm looking for a sales-and-marketing role. (7) **Ask for something specific – people do not remember generalisations**
- Barb: Okay.
- Bizz: Yes. Look here's my card. If you know anyone looking to fill a marketing role, perhaps you would pass it on to them?
- Barb: Sure. Here's my card Bizz.
- Bizz: Thank you. Oh, so you're the Head of Marketing at Martel Industries? (8) **Show interest in the other person by asking a question – use their card to prompt you**
- Barb: Indeed I am. I've got to rush off now and choose my next pair of shoes, but please give me a call Bizz. It was good talking to you.
- Bizz: Thank you I will.

(*This is just my sense of humour. Being cheeky is not good networking practice).

BIZZ & BARB – NOTES

FOLLOW UP ROUTINE

USEFUL NOTES

1) Always write the date and place you met the person on the face of their card. You can use this information to jog your memory. Add any notes on the back. Write down the information within 5 minutes of the end of the conversation or you'll probably forget it.

2) Put their card in your business card holder and write a follow up reminder note in your diary.

3) Follow up the conversation with a telephone call. The purpose of this is to arrange a face-to-face ½ hour introductory 'research' interview. This is a non-threatening approach and people can usually spare ½ hour at the ends of the day or at lunchtime.

4) The objective of the research meeting is dig for opportunities or other contacts. Always ask for referrals and if you feel it is appropriate try to get them to commit to a second and longer interview. Be specific with what you want – people do not remember generalised needs.

5) Gain commitment by using a forced choice approach. For example: "*Would you prefer to meet in the morning or the afternoon?*" or "*Which day is best for you?*" Never leave without a date in your diary.

6) Keep your answers short. In the world of work people tend to get irritated if they are delayed by rambling discussion. However, if you over-talk you will over-sell and you will "buy it back." Having seen this at first hand it's embarrassing to watch.

7) Stop talking and ask a question to get people refocused on you, if you see their gaze start to wander.

8) When people are talking they feel good about themselves. In a selling context when people are talking and feeling good they will reveal lots of needs and wants for you to sell into.

SELLING TIPS

1. Include the words "this means that" to make the benefit clear. For example: "My excellent communication skills *mean that* I am able to sell complex ideas without using complex jargon."
2. Go heavy on benefits. People want a return on their investment, so '**differences**' and '**tangibles**' always score points. For example: "One of the differences of *our* approach is that our products have a wide range of endorsements. Also, another benefit is our money-back guarantee, which lasts for the first 5 minutes after you walk out of the shop."
3. Be positive and confirm where you could be of use to someone. For example, respond to an obvious opportunity with: "**I could assist you with that.**"

SUMMARY

Effective networking is based around effective communication skills. Which need:

*PRACTICE Practice Practice practice
practice PRACTICE Practice!*