

The Networking Checklist

Networking is about contact-- contact with people.

A primary business activity for those who drive revenue (and even those that don't*), networking is a skill set well worth developing. In fact, it's a necessity. And, like all other parts of the sales process, it can be distilled to a few very authentic fundamentals.

In the upcoming year, you're sure to be in a networking environment (formal or informal). It may be a tradeshow, an association or civic meeting. Or, you may find yourself at the national sales meeting with an opportunity to meet the "home office" people who make sure your customers are served well. If you have nothing on the radar at the moment, see what networking opportunities you can create. There's immediate and long-term value to you and those with whom you connect. It's assured.

This is your guide to the fundamentals of successful networking... just sell style. Work it... practice it... improve it... and work take room. Finesse points are developed with experience... by doing. Nail these fundamentals and you'll make every networking experience you'll ever have a pleasure for you... and for everyone with whom you connect... professionally and personally. It's your time... it's your event... it's your room

the networking checklist

Well before the event, with your particular event and its attendees in mind, prepare (in writing) & practice (verbally delivering)...

your quick personal introduction

appropriate to the event

nothing fancy, no value statement here

use person's name if you know it or if they're wearing a name tag

Sample...

"Hi, Susan... I'm Bob Jones [with xyz company, in district 7, in the forms division]

general statements/ questions that will help initiate a conversation with someone (at least 3)

Samples...

"how long have you been [a member of, involved with] [specific group]?"

"what brought you out here [today, tonight]?"

"have you been to a [meeting type] before?"

"what do you think of the [show, meeting, event] so far?"

"what did you think of the last [show, meeting, event]?"

"what do you think about [event specific thing or event]?"

"how do you know [speaker, organizer of the event, sponsoring group of the event]?"

open-ended questions (at least 3)

choose your favorite with the particular event in mind
use the open-ended question tool or create questions of your own

your value statements (at least two)

statements of what you sell/ do in terms of the value it delivers to others

exit statements (at least one of each)

statement for scheduled follow up

Samples...

"can I give you a call next week to set up a time to talk in more detail?"

"would you like to get together on friday and work through the idea?"

statement for graceful exit

Samples...

"good meeting you... will I see you at [other meetings]?"

"well that sounds exciting... best of luck with that... I'll let you get back to [whatever the person was doing prior to talking with you]... enjoyed meeting you."

"it's quite an event... we should probably keep moving... i enjoyed talking with you, bob."

Just before the event...

set clear objectives & goals

specific people you want to meet or talk with
quantity of discussions you want to have
number of post event meetings you want to schedule

prepare your attitude

completely positive (no "tradeshow cynicism")
inquisitive mindset

At the event, work toward your objectives & goals by...

proactively initiating discussions

using your prepared and practiced introductions & initiating statements

 sending the right message physically

face the person completely

smile

energetic

asking open-ended questions

listen completely (without the intent to respond immediately or show your knowledge)

allow small gaps of silence (in many cases the other person will fill them with more information-sometimes extra information that's useful)

 giving undivided attention to the person in front of you

avoid wandering and scanning eyes (your goal is one-on-one attention)

answer cell phone and pagers when you're no longer engaged in the conversation

 delivering your value statements (when appropriate)

 maintaining your networking attitude to the end of the event

complete positive follow-thru (it's show time, literally)

rest after the event

After the event...

 quickly evaluate your networking performance

review against your objectives & goals for the event

 follow-up with appropriate individuals

written form as soon as possible (handwritten note, email or letter)

phone if appropriate

 begin to seek out your next event

set a target (once a month, quarter, etc.)

join a networking/ lead referral club

attend one or two events a year that are out of your normal parameters

consider parallel industries and attending their events