

# Strategies for Successful Networking

The Executive Forum was founded on the principle that networking is an essential component of business success. Yet there are many notions of what constitutes networking.

Networking involves building mutually beneficial relationships with others. This takes time. It involves getting to understand other peoples needs and looking for ways to help them.

For some people, interacting comes naturally. However, networking skills can be learned. This guide is intended to outline the specific strategies that you can learn to help you become at better at networking.



### 1. Be a consummate professional.

- A. Understand your business.
  - Have a mission statement and elevator pitch.
  - Have a track record in solving them.
- B. Are an expert in what you do, and professional in and how you do it.
  - Professional and adhere to trade practices.
  - Fair, honest and respectful in business.
  - Exercise good judgement and discretion.
- C. Can demonstrate this to clients.
  - Education and training
  - Professional associations
  - Awards
  - Publications
  - Results and case studies
  - Testimonials

### 2. Know your audience.

- Understand the size and nature of your market.
- Know what problems you solve for your clients.
- Have a written Client Profile and Client Criteria.
- Make it easy for others to articulate your value.

### 3. Understand your spheres of influence.

How many spheres of influence do you have?

- Professional
- Associations
- Religious
- Hobbies, Activities
- Club Memberships
- Family
- Neighborhood
- Geography

#### **4. Have an organized contact database.**

- This is your most valuable asset
- 200 to 500 names
- Maintained in a database
- Organized and segmented
  - Category
  - Keyword
  - Ranked into A, B, C levels  
(for number of touches during the year)
- Other key info:
  - Employment
  - Family
  - Key dates: birthday, anniversary, etc.
  - History
  - Expertise
  - Activities & Interests
  - Learning Style (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic)
  - Communication preference

#### **5. In contact with people on a regular basis.**

- Meet with clients on a regular basis.
- Attend networking events on a regular basis.
- Involved in professional associations.
- How many people do you meet or touch monthly?

#### **6. Know how to build relationships.**

- Identify common interests and passions.
- Share common values.
- Have similar personality traits.
- Understand their motivations and priorities (career, family, religion, hobbies, etc.)
- Know what problems they are solving for others.
- Have a routine or mechanism to stay in touch.

#### **7. Look out for other people's interests.**

- Learn what the people in the group do and what timing is appropriate for their services.
- Get to know members through house calls — what problems they solve and what makes an ideal client for them.
- Match people by personality types.
- Look out for their needs — send articles of interest, let them know of events and other opportunities in their industry.
- Build rapport through social events.
- Show your appreciation — say thank you (verbally, card, gift, dinner, etc.)

#### **8. Understand how to ask for a referral.**

- Timing: When you have done a good job, achieved a positive result and satisfied the client.
- Address their psychological reluctance against it.
  - Tell them you will respect them, and what you want to get out of the referral (introduction, sale, build relationship, intro. to others, etc.)
  - Tell the referrer how you will handle the call and meeting.
  - Tell the referrer what services would be appropriate.
  - Exercise discretion and maintain confidentiality.
  - Ask about other connections (things you have in common, how they met, etc.)
  - Thank the person who made the referral.
  - Follow up. Call when you say you will.
  - Let the referrer know the status — keep them in the loop.

#### **9. Make a commitment to networking.**

- Seek to constantly meet new people and keeping in contact with clients, referral sources and others.
- Keep people updated about your situation — new job, new services, new group or people they might be interested in meeting, etc.
- Look for opportunities to bring people together even if it's not for direct business (industry event they might be interested in).
- Continually seek to improve networking skills.

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