

# Business Know-How

## Networking – The Best Promotion for Successful Business



Fact: 70 percent of business is found through networking! Needless to say, effective networking is vital to your continued business success.

Rarely does business just “fall into our laps.” Instead, successful business partnerships are created when we target potential customers, establish communication and cultivate long term relationships.

It has always mystified me when I hear people say they never received any business from the associations they belong to. When closely questioned, they admit to not attending events or participating at the events. By getting involved in

the association, you can develop a substantial network of business contacts. There is nothing like working side-by-side with

another member on a committee, event or community project to learn what really makes them tick, and to show them what you are all about. But to get to that point, you first have to master the basics of networking, the first step toward connecting you with other people.

There is no magic wand or group that will give you networking results, only opportunities for those results. Below are the top secrets for networking. Feel free to adapt these basics to your own approach, and develop a networking style that feels most natural and honest to you. You will be networking like a professional in no time!

*“I will prepare and some day my chance will come.”*  
– Abraham Lincoln

## The Top Secrets for Networking Success at Association Functions

### Before the Meeting

- ✓ **Develop a memorable introduction for yourself.** This is what we call your elevator speech. In 5 to 45 seconds tell what you can do in terms of benefits for the other person. Something that says to them that here is someone I need to listen to.  
*“Hello, my name is John Erdman and I help companies avoid becoming the “best kept secret in town!”*
- ✓ **Put business cards only in one pocket of your jacket.** Leave the other pocket free to put in the business cards from your new contacts. This way, you will look prepared when you pull your card out easily from one pocket instead of fishing through a pile of cards. As nothing is more unprofessional looking than someone digging in pockets and purses looking for a business card and then giving out a dog eared card as the only one you can find.
- ✓ **Check your appearance (also your breath).** You only get about ten seconds to make a first impression. You can only do your best when you feel your best. This does not mean that you never network unless you’re looking and feeling great but if you have the choice .....Why take a chance?

### During the Meeting

- ✓ **Smile! Be friendly and show enthusiasm.** No one wants to chat with someone who looks like they have been sucking on a vinegar bottle. Enthusiastic people inspire other people to do great things. People are drawn to pleasant people.
- ✓ **Ask questions and above all, listen to answers.** Most events are also a social function. Give and get information. Ask other members how long they have been

involved in the association, what committees they serve on, or if they have heard the guest speaker before. Find out what interests them and keep on that subject. The key is the listening part of this pointer. When you listen your way in, you don't have to talk your way out.

*"Man who waits for roast duck to fly into mouth must wait very, very long time"*  
· Chinese proverb

- ✓ **Do not sell...Do not sell...Do not sell!** This point cannot be emphasized enough! Networking is a means of giving and getting information; it is a mutually beneficial exchange. It is not a one-way street for you to make sales. It is not making one party feel intruded upon at an event that was intended to be fun. This is a great opportunity to find out about a person's interests in a relaxed atmosphere, and to let them know how you can help them in the future; but do not try and close the deal at a monthly meeting or any other social event. There is a time for everything, and this is not the time to sell.
- ✓ **Treat the event or meeting as your opportunity to make friends, not clients.** It can take little or no time or effort to make a friend, but can take years to make a client. Friends are much more likely to use your services over your competition and are likely to be repeat customers. You get the added bonus of creating lifelong relationships and having fun.
- ✓ **Hand out your business card wisely.** If it is not suitable to the conversation, or if you have not even really had a conversation, keep your card in your pocket. Use your business card as a means to follow up on a personal exchange and as a way for that person to remember you. Remember your

cards are in one pocket – put others' cards in another pocket. Make sure there is a reason to give them your card. Add value to the card by ensuring that there is a reason for it.

- ✓ **Moderate your eating and drinking.** Amazing as it may sound, the more you indulge, the less intelligent you seem. If you plan on drinking more than a glass or so – do it at another location where you are not networking. Good manners still matter a lot, especially when you are making a first impression.
- ✓ **Sit with someone new.** People are drawn to sit with the people they know and are most comfortable with at meetings or events. If your goal is to meet new clients or forge new relationships, sit with someone you don't already know. This will give you 30 minutes to one hour to network with a potential new client.
- ✓ **Slow Down.** Don't try to break the world record for how many people you can talk to in one hour. Holding a memorable conversation with five people will almost always benefit you more than simply saying hello and handing out your card to sixty people.
- ✓ **Make eye contact.** Looking off into the horizon or down at the floor will tell the other person that you are talking but you are not listening and don't care. Don't look like you are trying to scope out the next sale. Making eye contact will show you are listening and that you care about what they are saying.

#### After the Meeting

- ✓ **Follow-up with contacts you have made.** So many people meet and network with someone but then never get back to them. Listen to what they want and need, then in the next few days show them how you can make it happen. If you told them about a new product they would enjoy, send the information immediately with a hand

written note. Did you see a magazine article on that product the other person was talking about? Mail it to them with a personalized message. Such small courtesies are remembered for a long time.

- ✓ **Volunteer for committee or association activities that you expect your target customer to attend.** Volunteering for the association is one of the best ways to show your trustworthiness and commitment as a partner in the business community and one of the best opportunities to work next to that target customer. Whether that means sponsoring an event or joining a committee, you can be proactive in your networking strategies without being seen as aggressive!

*“If a man is brusque in his manner, others will not cooperate...If he asks for something without having first established a proper relationship, it will not be given to him”*  
– I’Ching: Book of Changes

#### **About the Author**

John C. Erdman is a business and personal development expert, professional speaker and a corporate trainer. John has created numerous professional training courses; the most famous is “The C.A.R.E Program”, the four tenants that all successful people use consistently in their daily lives (soon to be in book format). He has been quoted or featured in The Seattle Times, The Chicago Tribune, Puget Sound Business Journal, The Woodinville Weekly, numerous newsletters and a Webnair guest on Networking with Dr. Lynda Falkenstein. For more information about John’s programs, products and services visit him at [idealco@comcast.net](mailto:idealco@comcast.net).

Remember, the follow-up contact you make after the meeting is just as important as the initial encounter. Treat the potential customer or client as you would like to be treated, and you will definitely be on the right track to increased sales. In order to successfully network your business you need to always be aware of the old railroad crossing saying – **Stop, Look and Listen then Proceed**. Practice networking skills and your business will boom.