



Marketing Tips

Effective Networking for Business Development *For lawyers and other professionals*

Networking isn't about how many people you meet or how many business cards you swap. It's about strategically creating opportunities to develop new business. Not business from clients – not business from known referral sources – but new business from companies that meet your business goals.

To turn networking into new business, consider this approach for your next opportunity:

PLAN AHEAD

What type of organization event are you attending and what is the purpose of your networking? Once you know that, make a list of the people you expect to attend and identify those you want to meet.

PERFORM YOUR DUE DILLIGENCE

Assuming you're a member of the organization, review the membership directory. Search for the companies or people with whom you want to connect. Make yourself a list of these potential contacts and then prioritize them. Make it your goal to meet *three* key contacts who can bring you business. Meeting three of the *right* people is the best use of your time, rather than chatting with 10 – 20 *maybe* people.

Now you have your target list for the event. Do some more homework. Research their businesses, review their latest news, check their websites and learn about their business needs. Do enough research to enable you to discuss relevant issues with those who are attending. With this information, develop a couple of key questions you might want to ask each of them. **People buy solutions to problems that are too big, too complicated, too delicate or too difficult to fix themselves.**

The next step is to find out if they are attending the event. Call the person in advance and ask if you could meet them at the event. If they are not attending, ask if someone else from the company is going and repeat your proposal.

BEFORE/AFTER YOU ARRIVE

Have a bite to eat before the event. You can't network with your mouth full and you don't want to risk getting intoxicated. Get to the event early – before it officially starts. Review the name badges to see who's attending. Wait near registration to see when your prospects arrive so that you can recognize them. Once your prospects have arrived, go inside and introduce yourself.

If you called them in advance, remind them that you spoke. If not, use your 30-second introduction. Your conversation should focus on what you know about them; use prepared questions to get your prospect into a dialogue. The better you listen and the better your questions, the more your prospect will talk, and the more you will learn about his or her needs. This is not

the time to ask for their business. The purpose of this event is to meet new contacts, establish the groundwork for a relationship and learn about their business.

AFTER THE EVENT

You have now completed the first three parts of effective networking. You have *identified, researched and met the right people*. The next and last part is equally as important. *Follow-up* is the key to effective networking because it creates closure for one activity and sets the stage for the next one.

As soon as possible after a conversation or after the event, make a few notes to yourself. You don't want to forget critical details. The first thing to do upon returning to work is to add your new contacts to Outlook or your CRM system. Note in their contact record when and where you met, things you talked about, and any firm or personal mailing list to which you want to add them.

At this point it is important that you put together a contact plan for each of the people you met. Set short-term realistic goals that are subsets of the larger goals. Develop and stick to a strategy. This will be an ongoing plan for future contact until you have developed a strong relationship that leads to new business.

People want to do business with people they know, like, trust and value. You can be that person.