

The Art of Networking

- By Lorena Prime -



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Do you have as many clients as you want? If not, then you may need to brush up on your networking skills in order to attract more business. Networking takes some effort but it becomes easier over time. In a referral type of business, especially, you need to know where to spend your networking time and how to be effective when you are there. Here are some easy tips to strengthen your networking skills.

- **Don't be shy.** It takes courage to walk into a room filled with people you don't know. There are several ways to make it easier for yourself. Bring along a friend who also could benefit from networking. Seek out another person in the room who looks equally uncomfortable; you'll both feel better talking to each other. Volunteer to work the event – it's always easier to talk with people when you have a reason to be talking with them. Don't forget to reach out to your Chamber Ambassadors as well. They work every event and are there to help you meet other people.
- **Set a networking goal for each event.** You won't get to meet everyone in the room, nor should you try. You want to form quality relationships, not just collect business cards. You are looking for someone you like, who seems like they might be a good fit for your personality and your business. Set a goal for yourself to meet two people you find interesting enough to invite for a cup of coffee. That's a great way to get to understand their business better and to help them understand yours.
- **Prepare a 30-second introduction (your "elevator speech") ahead of time.** Don't just say your name and your company's name; you need to target your message to each specific audience. Describe what you do in terms of "what's in it for them." What are they interested in? How can what you do help them... save time every day? Save \$500 dollars a month? Find more time to make sales calls? Gain more time to see their children's soccer games?
- **Remember names.** After hearing someone's name, try to use it three times right away so that you will remember it. People like to feel important and forgetting someone's name is a quick way to tell them, inadvertently, that they don't matter. To make it easier for people to remember your name, always wear your nametag on the right side of your shirt. That way when people reach to shake your hand, they will get a good look at your nametag.
- **Networking takes time.** You probably wouldn't recommend someone you've just met, and people may not recommend you right away either. A great way to get to know someone better is to have a "one-on-one" meeting where you have coffee or a light meal together. You'll begin to know them personally as well as professionally, which will help you recommend them (and vice versa).
- **Refer others (and you will get referred).** It's a two way street. Be a giver and refer others and you will be someone who gets referrals. When talking one-on-one with fellow networkers, ask what can you do for them, rather than telling them what they can do for you. ■

Lorena Prime, Owner of Clearly Organized, helps businesses get and stay organized as well as manage time more effectively so that they can spend their energy on revenue-generating activities. For more information, visit www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com or call 617-633-2199.