

Networking Notes

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Introduction

These are my ideas on networking and how to network, based on about 30 years' experience of belonging to business groups and organisations. From as long ago as 1975 I have been involved in the Junior Chamber movement. I was President of Lichfield JC, was a National organiser for debating and have been a member of several JC chapters. I am proud to now be a Patron of Dorset JC. Back in the '80s I chaired a local manufacturing association, was regional chairman of the Institute of Packaging and through the '90s I was involved in a wide range of networking organisations, including the Institute of Directors and Chambers of Commerce in the Midlands, and since moving to Dorset in 2003 have been very active networking in the south. I am still an active member of many organisations, am a former vice-president of Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and regularly speak at networking meetings across the south.

So these are a summary of my thoughts, take them as you wish and if you would like to talk to me about networking or any other aspect of business, just pick up the phone – my mobile is 07810 575247 – or send an email to david@winningbusiness.co.uk.

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Purpose

To seek introductions to, and build relationships with, people who may provide business or introductions.

To raise the profile of your business / yourself in the community.

Overview

Actively look for networking organisations and events which may be suitable for generating business or introductions.

Get as many details of the organisation or event as you can, together with a list of attendees or members if possible, and what it will cost you.

Make a proper business decision, based on the facts and the time commitment.

If you can't do it properly, don't do it at all – remember the most important part of **networking** is the 'work' part.

Process

On or before arrival at an event, obtain a copy of the attendance list if available.

Review list and highlight anyone who may be a useful contact.

Always take your own badge and a pocketful of business cards to an event.

If the provided badge is not clear enough, or it is just a business card holder, wear your own badge.

Seek out useful contacts, asking others for an introduction if necessary.

When talking to any group of 5 or more people, try to present what you do succinctly and interestingly.

When talking to fewer than 5 people, try to get sufficient information from them to determine whether they will be useful to your business or not, rather than telling them much about yourself.

Where the group allows it, seek out opportunities to present to the whole group.

When presenting to a large group, start and finish with your name and company, and fill the middle with interesting information or anecdotes, rather than a list of what you do.

If you meet with someone who could be useful as an introducer, try to agree to meet later to discuss it, do not talk too much at the event.

Make sure you keep the business cards of useful contacts separate from others, make a note on them if it helps.

Review

Always follow up an event quickly by making contact by phone or email with 2 groups of people:

1. those you spoke to who you highlighted as wanting another meeting with
2. those you would have liked to talk to and were not able to.

Use phrases like “it was good to meet you at and I would like to explore ways we could work together”. or “I am sorry to have missed you at ... as I wanted the chance to chat about how we may be able to work together...” “are you free for a coffee on either ... or ... next week?”

Objectively review the event:

Was it what you expected?

Was it worth going?

What could you have done differently or better?

Will you go again?

If you are going to regular events by one organisation, review them every 6 months to make sure they are still fresh and relevant to you.

Remember

The more you network properly, the more people you will get to know and the more the business community will see you as a useful member.

You should always try to help others by introducing them to people who will be useful to them and their business.

NEVER try the “hard sell” at a networking meeting or event, people will automatically and sub-consciously shun you.

Above all – have fun, be positive and add value.