

10 Steps to Successful Networking

Do you enjoy networking, or do you dread it?

I've found networking has helped me both in my professional career and in growing my coaching business. In fact, as a SOHO business owner, I would say that it's critical.

An unexpected benefit I've found is that some of my best friends and business associates are people I've met through networking.

Here are 10 steps that Adam Urbanski of *The Marketing Mentors* recommends and guarantees will bring you success in all your face-to-face networking:

1. **Brush up on your communication skills:**

Don't forget, people do business with you not because they understand your product, but because they feel understood. Focus on developing a rapport and connection with people you meet - not on making a sale. That's not what networking is about. Be interested in every conversation you have. We can all do this, even if we are naturally quiet and reserved.

2. **Plan adequate time to prepare for and debrief after each event:**

Arrive on time, plan ahead what you'll do when you arrive, plan when and how you'll follow up and do that within 24 - 48 hours. When you debrief, evaluate whether the event was a worthwhile networking opportunity. Were the right kind of people there? Did I connect with these people? Would I do it again?

3. **Decide who you want to meet and then select the right kind of networking opportunities for you:**

There are no right and wrong groups in general, only the right or wrong groups for you. There are basically four main categories of groups out there - professional associations, non-profit groups, typical networking groups and lead exchange groups. Professional associations are great places to get business if you are an expert within your own profession, with specialist skills your peers need. Alternatively, you can position yourself as an expert for other professional groups. For example, a CPA conference is a great place for a marketing expert to network because most of these people don't know how to attract clients, so they are ideal prospects. Participation in non-profit groups is a longer term strategy as it can give you a lot of positioning and open doors to greater contacts later on. Typical networking groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, BECs and private networking groups differ in size and structure and attract a mix and match of people, so they can be a bit hit and miss because you don't have a specific target audience. Finally there are the leads groups, like BNI. These can be effective if the group has great members. However, if everyone in the group is just starting out they can be a disaster as no-one has established business networks or enough business to share.

For more **free tips, strategies and resources** and to find out about **one-to-one business, executive or life coaching, the Energy Tapping Workshop (E.F.T.) DVD** or to arrange an **individual E.F.T. session**, visit the Blue Sky Coaching website at www.blueskycoaching.com.au. Tania can be contacted Monday to Friday between 8 am and 8 pm (Adelaide CST).

4. Prepare an attention-getting *audio* business card (ABC):

Just like you spend hours, days, weeks or months on designing your business card, you need to spend time crafting your personal introduction. Do it before you attend. It's not something that will just come out! Keep it short and conversational. A good introduction will include who it is you work with (ideal clients), what their core problem is and what the benefits are of working with you, your service or product. Aim to ask the person you're meeting about themselves first so you can modify your ABC accordingly.

5. Plan your positioning:

When you do this, you don't need to prospect. Instead, your target clients come to you! There is a dramatic difference between people coming to you versus you chasing them. Some ways to do this are being the guest speaker or the MC.

6. Have an attraction tool or 'hook':

It needs to be something you can give or send that is attractive to the people in your target audience, such as an informative or motivational CD, an article, newsletter or catalogue.

7. Identify and befriend centres-of-influence:

Each group will have either a leader or members who can position you, give you instant credibility with everyone else and open doors for you to lots of new contacts. So, rather than exchanging 10 cards at each meeting, exchange fewer cards, but with these key people.

8. Deliver value and build relationships by being interesting:

Most conversations at networking events are 'small talk' and don't go anywhere. Be different. Ask thought-provoking questions, be a little controversial. It will completely set you apart from the people that engage in boring 'small talk.'

9. Have a plan about how to achieve maximum visibility when you are there:

Networking by nature is one-to-one and very time-consuming. So if you're going to attend an event, find a way to get yourself visible to as many people as you can by, for example, donating a raffle or door prize or volunteering to introduce the speaker.

10. Follow up. Follow up. Follow up!

Create a system for doing this and continue to follow up, unless they tell you not to. Most people waste good opportunities for forming relationships by not following up more than once when they've met an ideal customer or client.

If you'd like to learn more secrets about how to use networking to connect with influential people, build life-long strategic alliances and effortlessly attract more clients and referrals without pitching, feeling awkward and worrying about rejection, visit Adam's website: www.themarketingmentors.com

*And, if you live in Adelaide and you're interested in joining a great women's networking group that I've belonged to since 2000, ask me about **The Adelaide Network**. I'd be happy to invite you to an upcoming event as my guest.*

For more **free tips, strategies** and **resources** and to find out about **one-to-one business, executive** or **life coaching**, **the Energy Tapping Workshop (E.F.T.) DVD** or to arrange an **individual E.F.T. session**, visit the Blue Sky Coaching website at www.blueskycoaching.com.au. Tania can be contacted Monday to Friday between 8 am and 8 pm (Adelaide CST).