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Sellutions

Something worth sharing: 12 keys to becoming a power networker

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Kim Albritton of BlackBeltBusinessProfits.com, one of my clients, put out a list of 12 networking rules. I love it and wanted to share it.

1. Don't try to sell. For most people, it all ends tragically here. They mistakenly stroll into the industry conference or chamber of commerce meeting with the idea that they need to find someone to sell to. Don't do it. It gives people the creeps. And it kills your real opportunity at these events: finding strategic partners.

2. Give before you get. Don't go to your networking event empty-handed. Make some deposits in your good will account. Build up your account first, by giving referrals.

3. Understand that it's network. I hate to say it, but power networkers work at it.

They cut up the newspaper and magazines to send articles of interest to the people in their network. They set aside time to think about whom they know and how people in their network can help each other.

The bad news is that it takes work. The good news is that a small amount of work will yield big results.

4. Be interesting. Everyone says you need an elevator pitch to use when you meet someone at a networking event. But, the way most people do it is, frankly, boring.

For our real estate services and surveying business, my partner has used "I give good land ..." and "I measure the Earth ..." She always gets a laugh and a follow-up question from the person she's talking with. It starts the conversation and people remember.

5. Set goals. Never attend a networking event without deciding how many strategic partners you're going to meet. If you're just starting, commit to two. As you get better, increase the number. When you hit the number, go home, knowing you succeeded.

6. Throw a Rolodex party. These are networking get-togethers with key contacts every few months. Agree with your key contacts that you'll meet for lunch and everyone will bring their

contact list. You share lists, looking for people you can be introduced to.

7. Be interesting. This one's important enough to mention twice.

8. Make it easy to refer to you. So, you've succeeded and you found a strategic partner who wants to refer people to you. She asks you: "Who's a good prospect for you?" And you say: "Anyone who does _____." You've just killed your opportunity for a referral.

Instead, make a "Top 10 People I'd Like to Meet" list and give it to your strategic partners. On the list, put specific people or specific positions within specific companies, such as "chief software architect, Microsoft."

9. Play matchmaker. Your job in networking is to match up people who can do business with each other or who can refer business to one another. Spend some time each week to think about whom you can match up within your network. Then make the introductions. I suggest at least two each week.

10. Say thank you. If you get a referral or introduction from someone, say thanks. Send a personal note. (You get bonus points for cookies or Starbucks cards.)

11. Test alliances quickly. Don't waste time on people who don't understand that networking is reciprocal. If you're giving and getting nothing in return, cut the relationship.

Often, you can determine how the relationship will go during your first conversation. If you're asking all the questions and the potential partner doesn't show interest in what you do, politely move on.

12. Have a system. Make your life easy and have a system for starting conversations, meeting with partners the first time, following up and making introductions.

Having a system does not mean you have to be rigid, just that you follow a defined set of steps. You'll be more effective if you're not reinventing the mechanics of networking at every event you attend.

What techniques work well for you?

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