

Finding Qualified New Prospects

Networking Events



Sell like you mean it!

The Online Business Development Training Program

Making More Out Of Networking Events

Introduction

Attending networking events isn't for everyone. These days networking has become synonymous with attending events and mingling with people most of whom want to sell to you rather than buy from you.

Often attending these kinds of events can be a colossal waste of time and money but if you are going to go you may as well get the most from it which is what this unit is all about.

We're going to introduce you to: -

- 3 things you need to take with you
- 3 things you need to do before you go
- 3 things to do when you get there
- 3 things to do after the event.

So 12 things in total that when combined will mean you'll get more bangs from your networking event bucks!

3 Items To Take With You



1. **Business cards** – I prefer to take referral cards which contain more information than the usual contact details on a traditional business card. Anyhow, take at least a dozen, more if you think you may need them. You might also like to put them in a nice case because **a)** it stops them from getting dog-eared and **b)** because it looks classy.
2. **Pocket Notepad** – small enough to fit into your handbag or inside pocket and a good quality pen, not some cheap biro with the end all chewed.

3. Crib sheet - I like to take some details of the people I want to meet at the event.

Personally like a photo of them (LinkedIn) and some simple background information such as: -

- Name, company and job title
- Hobbies and interests
- News stories about them or their firm

You can normally gather this information from the Internet: Google; LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and their company website.

3 Things To Do Before The Event



1. **Find out who's going** – life is so much easier if you know who's going to be at the event so the first thing is to find out. For me the easiest way is to ring up the organisers a couple of days before the event and ask for the attendee list. About 50% of the time they're happy to send it over but if they don't see below for plan B.
2. **Target 5 people:** Concentrate; penetrate, accumulate is my maxim. If you try and spread yourself too thin you'll no doubt cover a lot of ground but you probably won't make a lot of progress. So limit yourself to about 5 targets; people you want to speak to and achieve an objective with. If you get your sweaty palms on the attendee list you can research them as described above and you're good to go. **Remember to set an objective with each of your targets e.g. connect on LinkedIn, send something over by email or better yet arrange a phone call or 1-2-1 meeting for after the event.**
3. **Invite your own guests:** meeting new people is great but events are also ideal places to catch up with old acquaintances and to meet somebody for the first time so why not invite your own guests to somebody else's event? Of course you need to ask the organisers permission but they're usually only too pleased to have an extra bum or two on the seats.

Caution: if you do invite people you need to spend time with them; leaving them so you can “work the room” is not really on.

3 Things To Do At The Event



Arrive Early

This is especially important if you were unable to get an attendees list in advance because you can see all the name tags of the attendees laid out at the front-desk. Out of politeness you should ask if you can see who’s attending (I’ve never been told I can’t) then make a few notes of people on your pocket notepad (plan B).

You can also see attendees as they arrive, identify your targets and swoop in before they get involved with anybody else. It really is much easier to approach people when there aren't many people around.

Whilst we’re on the subject that’s why we have small talk: it’s an easy way to start a conversation and is founded on three different topics: -

- Anything shared (which is why talking about the weather is so popular).
- Observations (“I felt that the last speaker was very good”).
- Direct questions (“what exactly do you do?”, “what’s going well for you at the moment?”).

Focus On Your Targets

Now then. You have a list of targets by now so make sure you focus on finding them, talking to them and then achieving your objectives. Often it can be quite difficult to do this when the room has filled out. I also find it a bit awkward having to walk around staring at people’s name badges but there is an alternative you can try.

After the attendees have arrived and the canapés have been served the event administrators often have little to do so if you ask them for help they're usually only too happy to oblige. Try "I'm trying to locate Fred Bloggs, I wonder if you could help point me in the right direction". Sometimes they will and sometimes they won't but there's no harm in asking.

Introduce yourself, start with some small-talk and then bring the conversation round to business. In truth what we're looking for is for them to admit a challenge or issue that we can help with but I find the easiest way to do this is to begin by asking a friendly, positive and open question on a business subject such as: -

"What does <their company name> do?"

"What's your biggest growth area for you at the moment?"

"So tell me, what's going well for you at the moment?"

After a positive start you can move towards the challenges **"So what's your biggest challenge at the moment"** or if you want to bring it round to what you do **"so what's your biggest challenge in <your field> at the moment?"** Then you're away – press on with your objective firmly in mind.

If you're speaking to somebody who either you've achieved your objective with or you realise is no use to you then you need to desist and move on without delay – in other words you need an exit line. Here's a few good ones: -

"Well I suppose we'd better carry on mingling. Maybe I'll see you a little later".

"I just need to see <mention a real person> before he leaves. Will you excuse me?"

"Well you seem to be on top of things (compliment) I'd better get on. There's a couple more people I'd like to catch before I go. Very nice to have met you".

If there is a reason to give the person you are speaking to a card then do so otherwise keep them in your pocket.

- For incoming business cards I use both my trouser pockets: **"Left"** get left at the venue or the nearest rubbish bin and **"Right"** go back to the office with me for processing.

- It's perfectly ok to take a card offered by the person you are speaking to, whom you have no intention of contacting, study it carefully, pass on a compliment about it if you can then put it in your left pocket without giving them one in return.
- Avoid saying you're going to contact somebody if you aren't going to. It isn't very good form.

Focus On Adding Value

Let's think logically about this. You've engaged somebody in a conversation and feel they would make a good prospect but supposing they're not on the same page at all?

Supposing they already have some suppliers that they're happy with or perhaps they just aren't looking to buy what you sell at this moment in time. If you promote your services all you'll do is manoeuvre yourself into a corner with no chance to move forward.

My advice is to test the waters to see if there's any interest in forming a relationship at this time. If there doesn't appear to be the best way to engage is to use a currency to add some value.

Currencies can be how-to guides, videos, people you know who they would like to be introduced to, upcoming webinars and seminars. In short a currency something that draws on your assets; expertise or knowledge to add value to another person. They are one of the most powerful Power Sales Tools that we use in the Revenue Factory.

Make sure you're fully aware of all the currencies you have at your disposal and ask questions to steer the conversation round so that you can offer one of your currencies.

Let's just look at one example. Supposing I have a currency which is some research I've done on 10 single biggest problems facing the client community I'm trying to sell into. It's a report with a summarised version in podcast form. Now, I'm talking to somebody in that community who clearly isn't biting. Here goes.

Me: It's pretty tough out there at the moment. How are you finding it?

Target: Oh, not so bad but then again it's always going to be tough doing what we do.

Me: I know. We ran a survey in your industry recently to find the 10 ten challenges and what people were doing about them. I found it absolutely fascinating.

Target: Really? What sort of things came up?

Me: I can't recall them all but I do remember one of them was <<tell them>>. Do you want me send you a copy?

Target: Yes please.

Me: Great. Give me your email address and I'll send it over. I'd love to know what you think too. Is it OK if I give you a call afterwards to get some feedback?

Target: No, that would be fine. Here's my card.

Me: Thanks. Oh, by the way are you an early starter or a late finisher..... which is the best number to get you on at that time?

Ta dah!

3 Things To Do After The Event



1. **Ditch the no-hopers:** sort out your business cards as soon as possible whilst their owners are fresh in your mind. Remember, the left and right rule: contents of the left pocket to be left at the venue, right pocket to take right back to the office.
2. **Update CRM:** add new people; update the contact history of existing contacts and make sure any actions are dealt with (do any immediate actions now and schedule the rest into your task management system).
3. **Social media:** Invite them to connect on LinkedIn because this gives you a firm foundation to interact in the future. Also if they happen to be on Twitter make sure you follow them and their company.

Summary

Going to events can be a very efficient way of meeting people and moving a relationship forward but they can also be a crushing waste of time and effort. The difference between the two usually comes down to the 12 things we've explored in this briefing plus a little discipline.

My advice is to adapt these key messages for yourself and give it a go – you'll be quite surprised at the outcome.