

DON'T CONFUSE NETWORKING WITH CARD SWAPPING

NETWORKING TIPS

Effective networking is one of the best ways to build your business yet so many people do it so wrong.

The number one failing by business people is the delusion that – card swapping equals networking. Card swapping benefits two parties – the printing industry and the cleaners.

At your next networking event spot these people:

Homer Simpsons: Hanging out with their mates and eating and drinking. – Just go to a bar

Stalkers: Hounding the most famous person in the room – they will not remember who you are in the morning

Date Hunters: chatting up the pretty people – this works (this is how I found my beautiful wife) but not good for building business

Card Sharks: thrusting cards into everyone's hand – measuring success by the number of cards they bring back to the office – too many people operate like this

So how should you approach a networking event?

Aim to meet 1- 3 new people: The goal of attending any networking event should be to commence establishment of 1 to 3 new relationships. There are plenty of networking opportunities; you will not build an entire network in one event. A relationship is based on knowing people well enough so that when you call them in six months' time, they will remember who you are. This is never done with simply swapping cards and giving them your elevator pitch. Take your time and get to know them and their business. My goal when I attend a conference is to make one new real connection.

Prepare your Elevator pitch: Make sure the first 60 secs that comes out of your mouth describes something about how you solve problems for your customers – not a speech about you and your technology or craft. Get outside help on testing your elevator pitch.

Qualify your audience: Make an assessment on people, if they are not for you and they thrust a card in your hand – put their card into a different pocket and dump their card ASAP. If there is something of interest, dig deeper and remember to ask about them.

Talk to competitors: NZ SME's do not work well with competitors. Learn to talk about your business without giving away the 'secret sauce'. Explore opportunities for mergers and acquisitions or just plain collaboration.

Post Event: Follow up with an email or call in the next day or so – not from the other side of the room or in the car park as it appears desperate!

Linkedin: LinkedIn.com is a powerful free networking tool. As well as providing an up to date database of your network, it more importantly gives you access to your network's network. Start with a basic profile today if you do not already have one. The best uses of linkedin are: (i) reference checking new employees from your network, rather than those listed on the cv (ii) Getting introductions into businesses (iii) accessing potential employees, and (iv) participating in online interest group discussions. An interesting fact is in USA 80% of job placements are initiated via LinkedIn.

Groom and qualify your network: Take the time to groom and nurture your best contacts – use a contact schedule to make sure you stay on their radar – pass on links to relevant information to them.

Give and you shall receive: Relationships do not happen overnight, earn the trust and respect before asking favours.



This resource has been kindly provided by



If you have any questions, please call 0800 CHAMBER (0800 242 623).

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