

Shop Talk

Tips and trade secrets to improve your work life.



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Widen Your Network The Old Fashioned Way



Recently, I was introduced to a woman whom I would call a networking dynamo. Over the course of one lunch and the two weeks following our meeting, she introduced me to a cadre of contacts, job opportunities and prospective customers. When we met, she jotted down some notes then followed up with personal introductions via email.

Networking doesn't come naturally for some, those who do it well are extraordinary and make it look simple. People who are strong net-workers are passionate about life. They are interested in others, they identify common ground and genuinely make others feel important.

Here are some key's to developing your network:

Focus on the other person-engage in a meaningful conversation, ask interesting questions, listen actively, put

your devices away. Make notes about your conversation. People want to associate with people who are genuine and authentic. Think about how you can make the person in front of you feel important.

Ask for what you want-when introduced to a new contact ask for what you want and who you want to meet and don't be afraid to ask. Don't be shy, sell yourself.

Find common ground-in the case of my meeting, we realized we were both from upstate New York. You can always find something in common, you just have to be open to having a meaningful conversation. When you strike on a mutual interest, people remember you.

Engage-be committed and enthusiastic about your life and your business Build rapport, engage with others around you. Know your "sweet spot" so you can confidently describe what you do best and the type of businesses you are seeking. Ask them what they do best and start to consider how you might help one another.

Manners Matter-when someone sends you a lead or a referral, send them a personal note thanking them. In our fast -paced world, somehow we have lost our head when it comes to manners. Be on time, make eye contact and hand out compliments freely.

Most importantly, **following up and keeping your word** are the keys to being a great net worker. If you do all of the above, you are well on your way to building a strong network. Where it all falls apart is in the follow-up! The one common denominator I noticed more than anything else dur-

ing my tenure working with a women's networking group, was the lack of follow-up. I have witnessed 30 women in a room actively networking, even writing things down on the back of business cards. The next day, it's back to business as usual. I have personally called, referenced the conversation, asked for the introduction to a vendor they mentioned and sent an email all to no avail. Keeping your word and doing what you said you would do, making a connection, are networking 101! I don't know if it is insecurity, lack of confidence in the referral or what but you will have no credibility if you don't follow-up. Conversely, you will never get the business you so desperately want in return.

Here's to expanding your network!

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