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Don't let **Networking** turn into **Notworking**

By: Lori Dubois

Networking- some folks call it the rubber chicken circuit, pressing the flesh, or at worst, a necessary evil. Meeting other people to exchange information to further each others goals defines networking in a nutshell. According to Wikipedia, business networking "consists of exchanging information and establishing personal connections." The key thing to remember is that both aspects must be present together in order for networking to be truly successful. Exchanging information without a relationship isn't worthwhile unless your goal is to burn through as many business cards as possible in a short amount of time. Personal connections without an effective information exchange is nothing more than polite conversation, which could be done in the grocery store line, and will not bring you closer to your goals unless you are just looking for someone to talk to.

There is no doubt that effective networking can increase your business prospects. In order to make the most of your networking experiences, keep these things in mind.

1. Make a personal connection and exchange relevant information.
2. Turn personal connections into working relationships. Dig a little deeper to find out how you can help the other person.
3. Turn working relationships into referral partners by outlining a process that works and stick with it. While networking may have a flexible definition, truly effective networking always includes relationship building. The specific process you use is not as important as consistency in managing a practical number of referral partner relationships.

Forming referral partners will increase your leads, improve your visibility, and enhance enjoyment in your work; allowing you to improve your business, contribute to others' businesses, and form friendships and working relationships with others to enrich your life personally and professionally.

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