

## The Art of Networking

This month, we have a special treat. Guest writer, Cheri Johnson from Business Advisers International has submitted a column on the Art of Networking. Enjoy, and please visit Cheri's website by clicking here.

Note: I highly recommend Cheri's service.

The Art of Networking  
by Cheri Johnson  
AdviCoach© - Business Advisers International

While many see networking events and opportunities as a possible shortcut within the sales process &ndash; I&lsquo;d like to challenge you to leave your sales hat at the office and look at your networking opportunities as a way to establish business relationships and friendships. Consider your efforts more of a marketing activity.

Networking is not about selling. Networking is about relationship building. Networking is a way to increase your visibility and creditability so you are sought out and referred to.

At your typical networking event you aren&rsquo;t likely to find the ready-willing-and able to buy customer, even if you do they may not offer up that information immediately. They most likely want to take the opportunity to get to know you better. So if you begin your networking efforts with the goal of meeting people, have some nice discussions and building rapport you will have put yourself on the path to successful networking. After all, we really do prefer to do business with the people we know, like and trust.

Focus on learning as much as you can about each contact you make. Make the conversation about them and their interests. Prepare a couple of favorite questions to break the ice &ndash; whether they are business related or relationship builders. Tell me Joe, what exciting things are happening at ABC Company these days? Joe are you taking a vacation this year? Can you recommend a good book &ndash; I&rsquo;ve been looking for one? Concentrate on listening for messages and information that will allow you to be in the position to connect people. Giving referrals to others is one of the most valuable ways to build your credibility within a network.

Make sure you collect business cards. Following up with potential clients, referral partners or just to say it was nice to meet you is important. Your method of follow-up may be different for each group &ndash; but staying in contact and remaining visible will safeguard the integrity of your network and keep it strong.

The next key to successful networking is to show up often. It&rsquo;s better to have multiple exposures to a small target group than to have fewer exposures to more people. Sales are made by establishing visibility and credibility and building relationships. Experts say it may take seven to 12 contacts or touches before customers are ready to buy or referral partners are ready to refer you.

Keep in mind that networking is one piece of this equation &ndash; you must supplement it with other activities or contact touches; mail and email, presentations, association memberships, sending articles of interest, being seen in and around the community and giving referrals to others.

Where to network? Chamber events, networking groups, seminars or workshops, association events or tradeshow are just a few ideas. Volunteer your time and talk to people everywhere you go &ndash; make connections. Become a student of gathering information and finding out about people and their businesses.

As with any marketing effort, it&rsquo;s important to keep track of your efforts. How many prospects are you obtaining from attending these events, how many of those turn into sales and what are the sales dollars generated? You should examine the return on investment you are getting for your resource expenditure. It&rsquo;s possible that your resources may be better directed to a different networking opportunity.

**Make your networking goal to meet and learn about people and businesses, follow-up and keep in touch with those you**

meet, show up often and track your results and you will master the art of networking.

Cheri can be reached at:

BAI\_Consigliere@comcast.net

651-414-0459