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**THE POWER
OF BUSINESS
NETWORKING**

Business networking is a powerful tool to add to your company strategy. This tool can be used to get new contacts, announce a new product or service, meet new people, market research, or just to see how other people do it. There is no doubt that the ability to successfully network with others is a useful and extremely valuable skill and should be used often.

For some people, networking with others is a simple and easy task, yet for others, it can be a very embarrassing and scary task. You don't have to be a master networker for your networking experience to be fruitful or even enjoyable. There are some basic things you should know and do to increase the effectiveness of your business networking.

Learn How to Approach Others

After talking to several people regarding the topic of business networking, the majority of them said that this was the hardest and most daunting part of networking with others. If this seems to be the hardest part of networking, then there should definitely be a simple solution. If you're having trouble approaching others, keep this in mind, they are there for the same reason that you are, to meet new people. Here are some simple tips to remember:

1. Try to introduce yourself first; don't wait for others to approach you.
2. Don't just stick with the people you know. You already know them!
3. Grab the low hanging fruit. Start a conversation with people you think are by themselves or guarding the taco dip. They will be the most pleased you spoke to them.
4. Get something to eat; people are always chatty around food.
5. Talk with the organizers of the event and ask them if there is anyone you should meet and ask them to introduce you to them.

Making Rounds

We all know that if we allowed ourselves to, we would talk to the same person for the entire event and maybe even go home feeling like we had a good time. If the point was to have a good time, then we were successful. If the point of going to the event was to network, then we weren't too successful. So, the time comes when we need to move on and meet other people, but you're engaged in a good conversation. What do you do? Knowing how and when to move on to the next person is another critical skill that will make your business networking more effective. Here are some simple tips to remember:

1. Ask the person if they will introduce you to someone they know
2. Introduce them to someone you know
3. Excuse yourself to get something to eat
4. Saying "Thank you for your time, I look forward to speaking with you again"
5. Suggest the both of you introduce yourselves to someone else together
6. Schedule a time to meet to talk further

Strategic Networking

Ok, now that we have reviewed some critical networking skills, we can now take our networking to the next level and start to put together our strategic plan. After all, business networking is about determining who we want to speak to and what about. How many times have you attended a

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networking event and felt like you didn't get a thing from it? If you have had this feeling, try putting together a strategic plan. No, I am not talking about a massive takeover of the room, but a simple list of goals that you want to accomplish before leaving the event.

Here are some dos and don'ts:

- **Don't** wander around aimlessly
- **Don't** let a single conversation go on until the event ends
- **Don't** attend an event without knowing what you want from it
- **Don't** go home thinking "that was a waste of time"
- **Do** make the best use of your time and money
- **Do** talk to as many people as you can
- **Do** have a clear goal for attending the event
- **Do** go home thinking you would attend that event again

Here is the plan, simple, yet effective.

1. Determine why you're going to the event and make a list of things that would make the event worth attending. Examples include:
 - a. Advertising your own event
 - b. Getting your company name out there
 - c. Announcing a new product/service
 - d. Strategic partnerships/alliances
 - e. Meeting new people
2. Develop a "Hot List" category of people/businesses you definitely want to talk to. These people could include:
 - a. CEOs/Business owners
 - b. Hiring Managers
 - c. Retail
3. Put together a very short company intro for each category
4. Show up for the event early to get a head start and get comfortable with the environment
5. Determine if you met your goal and if not, try to figure out why.

Just remember, having a plan will give you the upper hand!



Thank you for reading this article

If you have any questions on the contents of this article, feel free to contact Bill Campbell at bcampbell@balancelogic.com or 301-396-8455.



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