

4 Best Practices for Networking in Person

By Ilise Benun



Did you know that in-person networking is, hands-down, the most effective marketing activity you can do?

Why? Because ...

- Networking will drastically shorten the time it takes to get the attention of those you want to work with.
- Through in-person networking, you will make the strongest possible impression on the prospects you meet, compared to any online impression you might make.
- You might even come across someone who needs you now, because people who need help go looking for it and they could find you!

Approach every networking event as a research expedition, rather than a sales opportunity. Don't try to sell yourself; instead, use curiosity as a marketing tool and seek to learn as much as you can about the people, companies, projects, and opportunities you come across.

What do you want to know from your prospects? What information would help you serve them better? Make a list of questions you are looking for answers to, then go ask them.

Questions are key because they represent a genuine interest and desire to learn what their needs are and how you fit into their world. Don't you want to know which projects they outsource? How do they make their decisions? How much do they spend annually on your type of services?

Here Are the Four Networking Best Practices:

1. Learn Something

You can learn from everyone — find out what they know that you don't.

2. Give Something

Listen to find out what they need. Then share what comes to mind and offer your own services, when appropriate. Don't withhold your ideas. They're not precious or original!

3. Offer to Network on Their Behalf

Ask the people you meet, "Based on our chat, how will I know if I'm speaking to someone you might want to meet?"

4. Ask Permission to Follow Up

Ask their preferred method of communication — some people never do email, others do email only! Then in your follow up, thank them for their time and anything they shared with you.

Where should you do this networking? The ideal environment is a room full of your prospects, whether they are newsletter publishers or dentists, small business owners or web designers. That way, you can talk to a lot of them all at once and in real time.

You may need to travel to find the right event, but it is often worth the time and expense if you follow up afterward and build on your investment by keeping the conversation going.

Of course, networking can also be done online; in fact, it often starts online; just keep in mind that without an opportunity to meet in person, it will usually take longer to develop a relationship.

So if there's no upcoming event to attend in person, then look for a virtual space online — a Facebook or LinkedIn group or an online forum sponsored by a trade association where members go when they need help and/or resources. In these online environments, to get any traction, you will need to participate and contribute without crossing the line into overt self-promotion,

which can be tricky.

Remember that networking is not about getting; it's about giving and building relationships over time.

And finally, here's a trick for remembering names — one of those little things that means a lot to people and shows you care: Ask how they spell their name. Don't assume you know, even if it's a common name. This exchange will lodge their name in your mind so you are much less likely to forget it and they are less likely to forget you too.

Now, get out there and meet some prospects!

Do you have any questions about in-person networking and building relationships? Let us know in the comments below so we can get you the answers.

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