

April Groves Business Networking Tips “Making Life Work For You” Blog

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The best thing I learned is the difference between a networking event and sales call. If you miss the difference between these two, the results can be disastrous.

If you are on a sales call, typically the person you are speaking with is a potential client. You carry that conversation as such. However, a networking opportunity is different. You aren't there to make direct sales -- you are there to create resources and relationships -- sales come later. I have noticed that there are always a few folks who seem less involved with others at these events. Their common quality is

that they always seem to be asking every person, in one way or another, for a check.

Stated differently, effective networking is not about selling every person in the room. It is about being remembered after the event as someone who was a real person. For me, I strive to be remembered as the person who is interested in the people around me. It is my goal at every event I attend to assist at least one other person in achieving their goals. It is this offering of support without expectation that makes my life meaningful as a person. It also has the residual benefit of growing my business.

Next, folks seem to do better when they place more emphasis on the person they are talking to than on themselves. So, I guess that would mean that the biggest mistake I see is people who are tense and overanxious. They feel like they have lost an opportunity if they don't give their entire pitch within the first two minutes of meeting a person. In fact, the opposite is true. I spoke earlier about the trust factor. Encouraging people to speak to you rather than you talking at them is a major piece of the trust structure. Engaging others in conversation will produce more benefits than swapping cards and pitches. "Relax" was the key.

If you are living your life with good will and good intentions, if you strive to be ethical and exceptional at your profession and you believe strongly in the benefit of assisting others, networking events will morph themselves into everything you ever needed them to be for your business.

“Help Yourself” From the KJ Group, LLC (Michigan)

- Take the Networking Survey attached and see how you stack up with the best!
- Check-out Networking Venues on the attached Networking Website List.

NETWORKING SURVEY¹

Gauge your networking abilities by taking a few minutes to take this survey. You will determine how you stack up with the best!

Networking Assessment Survey

**Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5
(1 Strongly Disagree - 5 Strongly Agree)
for each of the following statements.**

- I consistently arrive early to and leave late from networking opportunities.
- I frequently scan the sign-in sheet to learn who's attending.
- I am careful to not spend too much time with any one individual or group.
- I always obtain a business card from people who interest me and write appropriate reminder notes on the back.
- I focus most of my time at networking events on meeting new people and spend limited time with people I know well.
- I have a great interest in others and have masterful listening skills.
- I have excellent relationships with the officers, leaders, and organizers of my networking venues.
- I make requests for introductions to people who these leaders believe are a good fit for me.
- I am specific when I make requests for assistance.
- I believe that networking only begins at the networking event. I go out of my way to set up follow-up networking opportunities on a one-on-one basis.
- I have a personal advisory panel that helps me build my business.
- I am a win-win kind of person and believe that networking is a mutual exchange of information, ideas, and resources.
- When I give something of value, I politely look for a way the other person can help me in return (reciprocity).
- I am very consistent in my networking activities.
- I have a list of centers of influence and strategic referral partners.
- I have a scoreboard to track my networking activities and effectiveness.
- I am first a giver at networking events.
- I usually have a plan for my networking activities.
- My networking strategies are intensively targeted on specific industries or professions.
- I network everywhere.
- I help prospects with their problems even if they cannot be a good leads for me.
- I use the other person's name often in my networking conversations.
- I send thank-you notes and follow up consistently.
- I limit my eating and drinking at networking events.
- I am very confident and comfortable with myself and the value of my services.
- I look forward to attending networking events.
- I have a well practiced 15- or 30-second elevator speech.

¹ Credit for this survey belongs to KJ Group, LLC

- ___ I network with my suppliers and vendors.
- ___ I have specific goals for my networking activities.
- ___ I believe that following up is my responsibility.
- ___ I believe that quality is better than quantity in networking.
- ___ I actively volunteer at civic or nonprofit organizations.
- ___ I focus on being interested versus interesting at networking events.
- ___ I can answer WIIFT - What's In It For Them? - when I meet someone at a networking event?
- ___ I am very focused on a specific set of target markets versus scattered among many.
- ___ I have a large quality network of resources to share with others.
- ___ I use my vocational interests as opportunities to network.
- ___ I have met personally with the majority of individuals in my networking group.
- ___ I attend my networking meetings consistently. Out of sight means out of mind!
- ___ I often give speeches to various groups about my area of expertise.
- ___ I often bring other professionals to my networking events.
- ___ I often make the first move in meeting and engaging others in conversation.
- ___ I am masterful at the use of open-ended questions and layering (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How).
- ___ I network with people above me, below me, and sideways from me.
- ___ I am very well read in my area of expertise and in business in general.
- ___ I take a proactive approach to connecting with others.
- ___ I am an outstanding listener.
- ___ I ask the question "How would I know if somebody I know would be a good prospect for you?" on most occasions.
- ___ I focus on others, rather than my needs, at networking events.
- ___ I give many referrals to others.
- ___ I network with people with outstanding reputations.
- ___ I avoid trying to sell people in my network.
- ___ I know who the rainmakers are at the networking meetings I attend.
- ___ I make a good first impression in my attire, manners, and attitude.
- ___ I come prepared with a good pen, business cards, and other materials.
- ___ I know how to escape from long-winded conversations.
- ___ My personal introduction can pass the "So What?" test.
- ___ My cell phone is left in the car or turned off.
- ___ I network when I am busy and don't need the business.
- ___ I use breakfast and lunch times as opportunities to network. I rarely eat alone.
- ___ I don't hesitate to ask for help from others.
- ___ I network with successful people of good character.

Are you serious about increasing your networking efforts? If so, KJ Group² recommends that you explore the following venues to get started. Listed below are websites that have current events.

Automation Alley®

<http://www.automationalley.com/autoalley/Automation+Alley/Calendar+of+Events/>

Business Network International

www.bni.com

Michigan Women's Business

<http://www.miwomen.com>

Network Pods

http://www.networkpods.com/upcoming_events

The Troy Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.troychamber.com>

Professional Coaching Association of Michigan

<http://www.michigancoaches.org>

The Livonia Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.livonia.org>

The Westland Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.westlandchamber.com/events>

The Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce

www.bbcc.com

The Executive Women International

<http://www.executivewomen.org>

Greater Ann Arbor Society of Human Resource Management

<http://www.gaashrm.org>

Human Resource Management of Greater Detroit

<http://www.hragd.org>

Michigan Ontario Compensation Association (MOCA)

<http://www.mocaonline.com>

Michigan Association of Female Entrepreneurs

<http://www.mafedetroit.org>

Toastmasters International

<http://www.toastmasters.org>

Leadership Oakland

<http://leadershipoakland.com>

² Credit for the Networking reference list belongs to KJ Group, LLC