

“Networking For Newbies” by Andy Jones

One of the first lessons I learned in networking is selfish attitudes won't get you far. It is important to listen, learn from others, and look for ways you can help them. You will build lasting business relationships that will help create future referrals rather than gaining one customer here or there.

One of the best ways to get started is by looking locally for networking opportunities in your own community like joining your local Chamber of Commerce.

After joining, take advantage of the events offered. Before you go make sure that you are prepared. Bring enough business cards, flyers, or brochures with your services clearly explained and priced if possible. So that when you find yourself in a situation where someone is interested in what you offer you have the materials to give away easily. It also shows that you are ready for business and that you take pride in what you are doing.

One of the most important factors is your appearance; not only your physical appearance, but your body language. Have you shown up early? Are you dressed neatly in appearance? Are you walking around like you want to be there? Do you have a smile on your face?

One of the first techniques I learned after attending this networking meeting was how important it was when you introduced yourself. When introducing yourself don't just tell them your business type. “I build web sites!” But rather tell them how you can help solve issues in their business with your service. “I help people establish their business online through quality website designs and intense internet marketing which brings qualified traffic to their website!”

The words that come out of your mouth can make or break your networking experience. Remember to not just focus on your own business, but rather give the person you are speaking with the opportunity to share also. Think about how many times you have met someone, asked them what they did for a living, and then forgot their name along with everything they just said to you within five minutes because all they did was focus on themselves rather than building a relationship with you.

It is very important to listen. Learn to express real interest in what another person does or what they are looking for (listening skills). This helps build trust between you and your new business relationship. You never know what this person will do to help you or your business now or in the future.

We so often in our culture talk too much! You can make a lasting impression by listening to someone talk and then by asking the right questions. A good opening question is to ask someone if they attend any other networking groups. This not only breaks the ice, but gives both of you a common ground to talk about, plus hopefully some new networking opportunities. Another good question to ask is what do you like best about what you do and how did you get started in that field? Then you will find out more about this person and what motivates them and they will most likely ask you the same question back giving you the opportunity to share about your business. **“Networking Like a Pro. Brian Hilliard.”**

An important tip to remember is that when you give someone one of your business cards make sure you ask them for theirs. When you get their business card don't just put it in your pocket make sure that you look at it and let them know that you are interested in what they do.

After the event look at all your contacts and follow-up on all of them by the next business day. Thanks Janine! Call those you meet who may benefit from what you do and vice versa. Express that you enjoyed meeting them, and ask if you could get together and share ideas. This will help you remember them and help them remember you!

Another way to network is to volunteer for your local town or state events. These are places that you can meet numerous people and show people that you care. As you get your face out there more and more people will know you and the more comfortable you will get with networking. It is easier to get referrals if you are known.

Remember one thing if you are a networking newbie...don't be intimidated by being new at this. Most of the time people are willing to help you grow your business if they see you're willing to listen and help them with theirs!