

NETWORKING: THE POWER OF FOLLOW-UP

"Does he or she know you, like you, and trust you?
Does he want to see you succeed?
Does she want to help you find new business?
If so, then you have yourself a 'Personal Walking Ambassador.'
Bob Burg

Personally, I enjoy networking. For some people it has a bad name, conjuring as it does images of people feverishly circulating in a hot crowded room, clutching fat handfuls of business cards they will never use and wondering why they wasted an evening. It doesn't have to be like that, of course. A few basic pointers can make it far more interesting and enjoyable:

- Plan your networking carefully. Know your sector, track down the main events and be there. Why waste time networking with small local businesses if your service has appeal only to big organisations?
- Identify the people you most want to meet, and make sure you get an introduction through your host, or another colleague. Use LinkedIn to find the contacts you have in common
- When you're at an event, be friendly not pushy. Ask questions and be interested in others. The person you're talking to right now might never buy from you – but his sister might!



The most important aspect of networking, which is often neglected, is the follow-up. Best advice is to collect only those business cards that you intend to use to contact the giver in the following five days.

- Transfer all the details to your favourite database and note where and when you met.
- Find out all you can online about the person and her business (website, blogs, LinkedIn, etc.) and then lift the phone. A call is so much better than an email for arranging a time and a place. You can't chat about the best place to meet in an email; you can't have a laugh either.
- Go armed with more questions; be prepared to start building that all-important relationship that can bring you future business.
- And remember there's such a thing as Giver's Gain; instead of wondering what your new contact can do for you, think about how you can help her – through shared contacts, latest information, a really useful website. Many of the best networkers believe that everything comes back round eventually. Pay it forward, as they say.

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