

Business Networking

*What You Need to Know
to Generate More
Word-of-Mouth Referrals
Than You Can Handle!*

**By Jennifer Beale
Publisher & Editor**

www.BizNETWORKnews.com

Your #1 resource for business networking!



Executive Summary

You need more business fast! You generate leads through a mix of cold calls, direct mail, email marketing, advertising and maybe some public relations.

It works but it's a slow process and you don't have time to wait.

It's time for Business Networking AKA word-of-mouth referrals.

In my years of running a small business, nothing, and I mean nothing, works faster than word-of-mouth referrals received at a business networking meeting at being turned into signed, sealed and delivered new clients.

Funny, though, **many people think Business Networking is a waste of time. And given the way most people network, it is a waste of time.**

This ebook is all about **business networking as a way to make and exceed your sales numbers.**

It's an examination of the problems people face when networking to grow a business, written by a once shy business woman turned compulsive networker who grew a business from zero to six figures using this confusing yet phenomenal lead generating approach.

Understanding a few key attitudes and steps, and putting them into action, will turn business

networking from a waste of time into an ongoing flow of cash.

You see in today's business world everything is about relationships. People do business with people they like and trust.

Sure your current marketing turns into business eventually, and your marketing plan should include other ways of generating leads. But none of the other ways to market can consistently connect you with prospects and land you new business like networking can.

That you are reading this ebook means you probably have encountered some of the common problems that turn people off of networking:

- Useless connections
- No leads
- Lousy leads
- Unfriendly people
- Bad food
- Wasted marketing dollars
- Wasted marketing time
- Anxiety about having to stand before a group of people and tell them what you do in 60 seconds or less

Five years ago, I had never attended a business networking meeting. Shy and awkward in any social group (let alone one where I had to speak before a group and boast about how good I was at my trade), I avoided events like the plague.

For three years, as a self-employed Public Relations consultant, I had enjoyed the security of two long-term contracts. I was set, or so I thought.

One day, a business associate asked me to substitute for him at his BNI chapter and being a nice person I agreed to help him out not really sure what lay ahead.

All I remember about the meeting was that I, usually punctual, showed up a half hour late. Not a good way to go unnoticed or make a good first impression. Then when I stood up to present my one-minute introduction, I stumbled over my words.

And afterward I felt embarrassed and unprofessional. “Thank goodness I don’t have to do that every week to get business,” I remember thinking.

Shortly after, one of my contracts ended suddenly and I shifted my business to provide PR for experts and other professionals.

That I would now have to generate a steady stream of leads didn’t even cross my mind, though, until the day I launched my new business, unleash pr.

I considered traditional marketing approaches like cold calls, direct mail and advertising. But I couldn’t afford the long wait for results. Necessity certainly is the mother of invention. Forced to find business fast, I swallowed my pride and went back to the BNI meeting.

I even applied to join the group. They accepted me. And the following week I attended as a member, albeit much better prepared. A professional woman handed me a white slip of paper, and within one week she became my first PR client.

Gradually, I learned, and eventually I became an expert at networking. I developed my talent for connecting people, and within three months of joining BNI, received direct leads that amounted to more than 10 times my initial fee.

Great leads. Lots of new business. Very short period of time. Word-of-mouth referrals – I was hooked.

With a bit of preparation, my elevator pitch sounded great. I became so good at networking that one day in an elevator when I had literally 30 seconds, I got a lead that turned into a client.

At the time, I had a super business coach who helped me develop a system for cultivating quality leads at business network meetings. One month alone, I generated 90 – yes nine zero – leads from word-of-mouth marketing. Overloaded, my system crashed and many fell through the cracks.

So I improved the lead capturing system by including valuable management tools that allow me to manage leads and turn the networking tap on and off as required.

Today, I continue to generate leads from business networking events. And you can too!

Everything I have learned, you can learn, as well. Remember, I used to be pathetically shy and turned that around in about six months – and you can too!

After you read this book, your sense of business networking will never be the same.

When you learn where to network and how to network and what to do with all the leads you generate, you will get the results you want.

When you get new business in a very short period of time, like me you will become hooked on business networking.

I hope that what you discover here provides you with an honest, dignified, no-nonsense approach to business networking, and I encourage you to add business networking to your marketing mix TODAY!

Your life is all about relationships, and with a few of the right questions, any situation becomes an opportunity to network. It's the best way I have found to generate more leads than you can handle, literally, and turn them into business quickly.



Happy Biz Networking!

Jennifer Beale

Publisher & Editor

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Chapter One

The Networking Mindset: What's Going On In Here, Anyway?

You didn't pay \$25 to have a nice meal. You didn't get up before the sun to socialize and small talk with business people. Like most, you gave up a couple of hours to meet other professionals and exchange qualified leads. Right?

And as you drove to the meeting, you imagined a couple of good referrals coming your way and maybe a few for others.

Yet you just left with no leads. You didn't connect well with anyone. And you're a bit frustrated. It seems you just wasted a couple of hours that could have been better spent stuffing envelopes for your direct mail campaign or on the phone cold calling perfect strangers who are not expecting your call and don't want what you're selling.

What's gone wrong? And what, if anything, can you do in the future to get the results you desire?

The key to your success as a business networker requires a mental shift. The good news is anyone can learn this mindset and put it into play. Your results will change dramatically and

permanently. But first you need to understand where you are and what needs to shift.

If there is nothing else you get from this book, let it be this: **You, and you alone, are responsible for the business results you receive at any networking meeting.**

Not the organizer.

Not the people who attend.

Not the owner of the meeting establishment.

Not the president of the group.

You are responsible, period.

Great news! The moment you take responsibility for your part in the meeting is the moment you will start getting the results you desire. This is true in any area of your life, by the way.

The bulk of success in business networking rests with you – not others. So here is the mind-set crux for business networking success.

Givers get. Givers gain. You must give to get.

There are as many sayings as there are groups.

Zig Ziglar said it best – ***you will get everything you want when you help enough other people get what they want.***

The top networkers know that giving is the way to success. Do what they do and you too will be on the road to success!

Now, let's be clear about what giving is and isn't in the context of business networking.

At a networking meeting, giving does not refer to the added value someone receives when you sell them your ideas, products and services. That's a given.

In fact, the business networking event is not the place to sell your stuff so best you stop that approach.

The business networking event is the place to meet lots of people all under one roof, people who want to meet you and want to hear about your business. Seek people who you can help on many levels, and who can help you and the people you know.

Giving does not refer to favors and it does not mean giving people more cash value than the cash received for what you sell. Do either of these too many times and eventually you will go broke.

Let's be clear – giving is all about adding value to someone's life so they become more successful.

Add something that makes someone more successful and you will make a lasting impression and have people wanting to meet you again by phone and in person.

If you want to know what is valuable to someone, try asking these key questions:

What do you want more of in your life?

What's the biggest problem you have?

How can I support you best in getting what you want?

Everyone has a problem of some sort that they are working on to find a solution. Center your conversations on discovering their problem and you will quickly find the best way to help them now *and* stand out from the rest of the people in the room who haven't read this ebook.

All you have to do when you network, after a brief introduction, is ask people what they want more of in *their* life. When people attribute getting more of what they want – be it freedom, financial security, friendship, whatever – to you they will want to reciprocate.

The bottom line is people who succeed at business networking are people who relate well to others. Be genuinely involved in increasing the success of others and watch your success skyrocket.

Chapter Two

Where Are You Going To Network?

Everywhere!

Once you have the mindset and some great questioning skills, literally, you can network everywhere and anywhere.

As we discussed in Chapter One, as far as I am concerned, people who network well are simply people who relate well to others.

So when you are out and about at any function, meeting, get together – whatever – you have an opportunity to generate leads.

One morning, for example, I was walking my dog in the local park. I stopped to chat with a passing neighbor about some local issues – and then with a few great questions, we were talking business.

I discovered he had a new company starting up and I knew someone that could recover money for him from the government. As soon as I got home, I connected the two and both were extremely happy.

Next time we met, I asked what an ideal prospect looked like and he mentioned hotels. I thought of a contact at a hotel and when I got home connected the two.

My neighbor thanks me every time he sees me and even drops by once in a while to connect. He gives me an update every time and tells me he would like to reciprocate.

Here are 10 places where you can network and some tips on how to leverage the context:

1) Formal networking groups such as BNI, Referral Quest, Le Tip

Everyone receives a turn to introduce them self to everyone else. You have 30 to 60 seconds to do this. The great thing is everyone expects you to network. Prepare a catchy introduction and you will attract people to you. Also, take notes during others' introductions and flag people you want to meet.

Usually, these groups follow a formal structure. They are ideal for learning "how-to" network, and may offer added support to help you develop your infomercial and learn to give first.

For a full list of formal business networking events, visit: www.BizNETWORKnews.com

2) Informal business networking groups where you work the room such as Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce

At these groups, everyone expects you to prospect. Set a goal of how many people you want to meet and be prepared to ask great questions.

Only request business cards from people you would genuinely like to connect with again. Only exchange your card when it is asked for. And if you are unsure why someone is asking for yours, ask why they want it and how you will follow up.

Only exchange business cards when you both recognize a connection and agree to follow up further by phone or in person.

NOTE: Some people run around handing out their card to everyone. Don't do this – it's a waste of time and cards. Business networking is about building relationships, and handing out your card to someone you haven't bothered to take a few minutes to meet shows lack of respect.

For a full list of informal business networking events, visit: www.BizNETWORKnews.com

3) Association meetings attended by your prospects

Depending on the association, prospecting may be frowned upon. These meetings are a great place for you to meet prospects. When you find a good association, join and get involved.

Attend meetings regularly and contribute to the success of the organization. Become known as a giver. Set a goal to meet a set number of people each meeting. Ask great questions to

identify problems, and follow up whenever there is a mutual desire to do so.

4) Conferences & conventions attended by your prospects

Circulate through the trade show and meet the vendors. They are actively generating leads and eager to talk with you. Ask a few qualifying questions, and determine whether there is a good fit. When you discover a fit, decide together what the next step will be.

Each day, set a goal to meet a set number of people at the convention. If there is an informal networking event, attend (review #2). Often there will be a dinner of sorts. Attend and be intentional. Sit with people you do not know.

Ask everyone great questions so you engage in meaningful, business-related discussion and can flag people to follow up with.

5) Workshops and seminars

Meet as many people at the workshop and seminar as possible. You now have this event as a common learning ground and can build relationships based on what you learned. Great questions go a long way.

6) Social parties

Business networking is not the main focus – in fact it may be frowned upon. Small talk will break the ice. Everyone loves to tell others what they do so some great questions will go a long way. Practice building rapport with people you meet.

Most people know more than 250 people so don't pre-judge anyone. You never know whom you will meet and whom they know. Knowing me, for example, puts you two people away from President George Bush. Didn't know that, did you?

Each person you meet and develop a relationship with is in fact increasing your prospect list by 250 people. Do a bit of math – it won't be long before you have a massive prospect list.

7) Family get togethers

Some people are uncomfortable doing business with family members. There is nothing wrong with doing business with relatives. If you are uncomfortable with this, you may want to examine why and move through it. Or you may not. It's your choice.

8) Public spaces

Become comfortable meeting complete strangers anywhere, anytime. Relax and be yourself. The key to meeting new people is to be interested in them, as well as interesting. If you are riding on public transit, for example, notice what people are reading and strike up a conversation around that.

If you are standing in line, strike up a positive discussion about something you notice about the environment. Once you build rapport, ask some great questions.

Once, while waiting for an elevator, I struck up a conversation with a woman who appeared to be an interior designer. I showed genuine interest in her line of work and we got chatting.

Still chatting, we got on the elevator with literally 30 seconds to the floor I was going to (I timed it later). She asked me what I did and before I got exited, she asked for my business card. Of course, I got hers, and soon she was my client. Today we are still business associates.

Now, if I had not shown interest in her, she would not be in my life today. And that would be a tremendous loss.

To summarize, when you become interested in other people and engage in meaningful conversations, you open opportunities for each of you to be more successful. When you do this, your success is guaranteed!

Chapter Three

Great Questions: They're Everything When It Comes to Meeting People

Great questions are easy to develop. For ease in remembering, I classify them in three ways:

- 1) Questions to Build Rapport
- 2) Questions to Add Value
- 3) Questions about Next Steps

Building rapport questions are easy, friendly questions that show interest in someone. Here are examples.

- 1) What do you do?
- 2) How did you get started in your business?
- 3) What do you enjoy most about your line of work?
- 4) What does an ideal prospect look like to you?

While listening carefully to the answers, begin to think about people you know whom you could refer to this person. At this point you don't need to give them the leads. Just mention you may

know someone who can benefit from what they offer.

The best way to build trust and credibility with a prospect is to refer business to them.

If you find you are unable to help this person, think of who in the room may be able to help them and make a professional introduction.

Then meet someone new and begin to build rapport.

Once you establish rapport, and decide you can benefit one another, ask the following added value questions. These questions are always open-ended, and when you ask them you will sound different from the rest of the people in the room who are focused only on what they want:

- 1) What do you want more of in your life?**
- 2) What is the biggest challenge/ opportunity you face right now?**
- 3) What stands between you getting what you want?**

Now go through the people you know and trust and can refer as a solution. Again, you don't need to give them names and numbers on the spot. Ask for their card and let them know you will call to follow up.

If you are the person, it's okay to ask a few qualifying questions. Or you can just get their card with the intention to follow up after.

If at this point you have not told the person what you do, GREAT! Usually, at some point in your conversation, the prospect will ask you what you do. This means you have built trust, they like you, and are open to hearing about what you do.

Keep your answer to one or two sentences. Forget your 30-second or one-minute infomercial. Give them the essence of what you do then let them respond.

If they seem interested, ask a couple of qualifying questions. If they don't qualify, let them know and explain what an ideal client is for you. If they qualify or they know someone who needs what you offer, ask a next step question like: "when is the best time to contact you?" Take the lead and tell them you will call and when.

Again, ask for someone's card and give yours only when you establish a reason to follow up. Do the opposite of what most people do and you get noticed and remembered.

When you exchange cards, ask permission first, and then jot down some notes on the back of their card, such as the event name, date, and why you will be calling them.

Do this consistently and you will never again have a pile of cards on your desk that you have no idea what to do with.

Now here's my biggest secret on how to really shine in someone's eyes. Demonstrate your pro-

fessionalism by following up within 48 hours, and continue to build the warm relationship.

I know. This sounds like a given, right? Believe it or not, most business owners don't follow up with the people they meet in a timely fashion or at all. Why, you ask? Probably because they don't have a business networking system and most leads fall through the cracks.

When you call them, if it ends up you cannot help directly, help them indirectly. Connect them to someone who can help them solve their challenge. Or refer someone who needs their products and services. Help enough other people succeed and you will succeed.

Whenever there seems to be a fit, follow your sales or buyers process with the appropriate next steps.

Chapter Four

The Biggest Mistake Almost Everyone Makes . . . Winging It

When it comes to marketing as a whole, about 95 percent of small business people wing it. What I mean by this is they fail to follow a system that keeps them focused, clear and on track. When you wing it, you cannot forecast sales and business growth.

To solve this common problem, simply devise and apply a business networking system.

1) Determine your sales numbers – establish a goal for how many people you will meet. Keep track of these numbers, as well as the number of leads you receive and the number of sales you make from these leads. Then you will know how many people you need to meet for business networking to make excellent marketing sense.

2) Preparation is 95% of any job – before you head out to a business networking event, research who will be there and how many people are expected. You can find a complete list of business networking events and contact information of organizers at www.BizNETWORKnews.com.

Before you attend the meeting, check your day timer and ensure you have time within 48 hours of the event to follow up all leads you receive.

Prepare some great questions to ask people, and ensure you have business cards. Some meetings have a table where you can place flyers, brochures, and business cards. Typically, I find people take the information and spam an ad about their business. Don't do this – spend time meeting people and building relationships because that's what business networking is all about.

3) Follow up – when you receive a business card, ask permission to write on it. This shows respect. Jot down your next steps, as well as the event where you made the connection and pertinent notes.

Not only does this make it easy to follow up, it shows you are serious and professional. When you make the follow up call as agreed, review the business card. Call and remind them where you met and your decision to connect again. Qualify whether you can help this person and/or whether they can help you.

4) Manage your leads – in short order you will accumulate many business cards. From my experience, the best way to manage leads is with a high-quality contact management software sys-

tem such as ACT!, Outlook or a web-based service such as www.bettermail.ca.

Keep notes on each person, and stay in touch every 30-45 days. When you come across an article that appeals to their interests, email it to them. Invite them to another event. Send them leads! And if you're really sharp, learn how to joint venture and make money from connecting people.

To summarize *Business Networking* here are . . .

10 TIPS TO ENDLESS WORD-OF-MOUTH REFERRALS

1. Cultivate a business networking attitude – Givers Gain!
2. Don't ever pre-judge anyone – everyone knows about 250 people and they may just know someone you want to meet.
3. Become interesting and be interested in others.
4. Develop a business networking system
5. Maintain your database
6. Connect with prospects every 30-45 days

7. Join 2 or more Networking groups and attend regularly. Many formal networking groups offer exclusivity for an industry, and have structure to the meetings, as well as provide support. They are great places to gain confidence in speaking before people, and learn to be an awesome business networker who gives.
8. When someone sends you a referral, acknowledge the person in writing. Keep them apprised of what happens.
9. Network with everyone everywhere! And have fun while you are doing it.
10. Follow up. Follow up. Follow up.

Most of all HAVE FUN! Life is all about relationships. Some may seem better at it than others.

I know from personal experience that anyone can become great at connecting with others.

Once I was pathetically shy. I tripped on my words and embarrassed myself dearly at my first business networking meeting. I avoided all public settings where I might need to meet people I didn't already know.

Yet I pressed on to build a successful business solely through word-of-mouth referrals.

Today I enjoy walking into a room filled with people I don't yet know – and sometimes they even give me the mike and I speak with confidence and genuine enthusiasm before hundreds of people.

Relating is the most rewarding skill you can develop because people are what make life and business worthwhile. Begin today to grow your business through word-of-mouth referrals, and you will enhance other areas of your life tenfold.

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