

Top Ten Facts About Successful Networking

by Alice Wojcio

1. **Networking is not just about getting a job, or selling a product or service.** Its main purpose is to give or get useful information. As such, it is one of the best research tools we have available to us.
2. **It doesn't have to be slimy!** We've all been bombarded by high-pressure salespeople trying to sell us things we don't want or need. Even if we do want or need some of those things, we refuse to buy because of the offensive sales tactics. In today's successful networking model, we look for ways to help other people, and we don't ignore people who may not be in our target market.
3. **Networking gets harder when we feel more desperate!** Others can sense when your sole purpose is to make a sale or find a job. If you change your objective to taking a single step closer to your goal, the stakes won't seem as high and you feel more relaxed, less desperate.
4. **Never put anyone you are networking with on the spot—take the pressure off everyone!** The easiest way to do this is to ask general questions rather than direct questions. Ask about "business owners like you," "companies like yours," "in your industry," instead of seeking information specific to them.
5. **Replace, "Do you know anyone who...?" with, "Whom do you know that...?"** When you ask a question that has a yes or no answer, it's easier for your audience to say no and then stop thinking, and yet we all have a desire to help people. Asking, "Whom do you know at XYZ Company who could answer my questions about _____?" will encourage problem solving rather than an easy "No," even if you don't use the word "whom!"
6. **Networking is happening all the time, even when you don't think it is!** We've all heard that you never have a second chance to make a first impression. This is not to say we shouldn't be ourselves, but to remind us that everything a person sees in us speaks as loudly as our words. The second part of this is that everyone you know could be in a position to help you reach your goals, even if you don't know how they can.
7. **Your results will improve if you decide in advance exactly what you want to gain from an event.** Find who will be there. Do you want to meet three new people? Learn more about volunteer opportunities in an organization or region? Find a better mechanic? Look for volunteers for an organization near and dear to you? All are possible if you keep in mind why you're there. *With that said, be sure to remain open to the unexpected and give yourself permission to take another path when it presents itself!*

8. **Networking works best when we build relationships.** It shouldn't be used just to look for sales opportunities or try to promote ourselves. If we are so focused on "the next sale" (putting dinner on the table), we come across as tense, and may fail to build relationships for the long term. We may even overlook a person whose own network could generate huge benefits to us over time.
9. **Relationships are best built by offering information, ideas, resources, advice, support, and connections without any expectation of a return.** Those who give freely are much more apt to get results than those who are stingy and withhold information and ideas. You will come to be known as a "go-to" person and your network will grow dramatically. Those who attach strings to their help won't be sought after for long.
10. **Educating your network about what you do and how you do it increases your chances of success.** Although the people you know may not be candidates for your product or service, or they may not directly have a job for you, the more they know about you and what you do, the more easily they will be able to tell others about you. You want them to be spreading the word for you!

...and don't forget:

11. **Quality is so much better than quantity!** Meeting 2-3 people at an event and learning more about their needs and challenges is far more valuable than collecting (or giving away) 20 business cards. Understanding a person and his or her business will give you good insight as to what you can do for them when an opportunity arises—be it information, a link to another person, or an offer of working for them as an employee.
12. **What you get back doesn't necessarily come back from the same people you've helped in the past!** Those you help will spend time saying good things about you. As word gets around, other people will seek you out. As your good reputation grows, other people will help you, and you will reach your goals, helped sometimes only indirectly by those you've helped in the past. Even though this is very true these days, some of your contacts may still expect something in return for their help. *Be sure you know this before you disappear into the sunset!*

Alice Wojcio works with organizations who want their employees to get along well with each other so they can be more productive, and with business owners who want to reach their potential more quickly. She is a training consultant and coach who specializes in leadership development and building high-trust work teams. Learn more about Alice and her company, Advantage Training & Development at www.advtrain.com. Alice can be reached at 888-882-0017 or at alice@advtrain.com.