

Networking Essentials

“If I had to name the single characteristic shared by all truly successful people I’ve met over a lifetime, it is the ability to create and nurture a network of contacts.”

Harvey Mackay

Networking:

*Everybody talks about it, but
what is it really?*

What is Networking?

“The systematic process of seeking mutually beneficial relationships and forming strategic alliances that will help individuals and organizations grow to their full potential.”

Networking is something that:

EVERYONE knows they should do

SOME want to do

FEW actually know how to do

Biblical Foundations of Networking

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” Luke 2:52 (NIV)

“Do not withhold good from those whom it is due.” Prov. 3:27 (NIV)

Networking is about Service

- How can I serve others?
- How can I listen to their needs?
- How can I help people get where they want to go?

Getting Started: Retrain your Brain

Common Outlooks on Networking:

- I just feel like I am talking to someone to get something from them.
- I don't know enough to engage this person in an intelligent conversation.
- I've never been good at meeting people, that is not my personality.

Ways to change your attitude about Networking:

- Understand what God has called you to do
- Redefine what it means to interact with “strangers”
- Try and get to know who you are talking to
- Prepare and practice your self-introduction
- Risk rejection

How to create an “elevator speech”

- Speech should be between 15 – 30 seconds
- First write down the services or features that you provide
- Share the benefits that your clients or employer could derive from these services
- Grab the listener's attention
- Leave them wanting more
- Listen and practice it!

Elevator Speech Examples

- "Hi, I'm Dale Kurow, and I help people become more successful at their work. For example, I've helped a client change jobs with a 40% salary increase, I've helped a client develop the skills to deal with a difficult boss, and I've helped a manager devise new ways to keep her staff motivated."
- Hi, my name is Stanley Manly, and I help inventors tell the world about their inventions."
- "Hi, I'm Sally Hopeful. I partner with companies that need to find talented people to help their business growth and become more profitable."

When do I use an elevator speech?

- When someone asks, “what do you do?”
- You can use it at networking events, or when you meet new people
- You can create a speech that is as short as 15 seconds, or up to 3 minutes

So how do I start networking?

- Brainstorm for events and contacts
- Identify the goals you want to achieve at the event
- Pray about who you might meet at each event and how you might be able to help them
- Treat others as you would want to be treated
- Listen carefully and try and determine how you can help others

Networking Event Etiquette

- Proper food etiquette
- Start With a Purpose
- Introduction etiquette
- Spend 8 – 10 minutes with each person
- Place Your Name tag on the right side
- Have an effective handshake
- Always have your business card available.

Business Card Etiquette

- Never leave home without them
- When you give one, ask for one
- Be generous
- Ask for referrals

Following up

- Write a letter - include a business card
- Remember personal details
- Create a system for keeping up with who you met
- Send thank you notes

Review

- Start with a purpose – pray for God appointed meetings
- Have an effective handshake
- Introduce yourself
- Ask questions and listen
- Follow up after the event

View Networking within the context of your gifts and values:

- Faith: Belief that God has called me to a specific mission and He will lead me to people according to His purposes.
- Excellence: Conducting myself in a professional manner consistent with my beliefs; doing the ‘little things’ well.
- Simplicity: Knowing what my purpose is and being single-minded; not complicating things.

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TOOLKIT

Networking for Dummies

by Mark Begly

It's been a buzzword for two decades. Everybody talks about it. Most business people think it's important. But what, exactly, is *networking*? And isn't there something "wrong" with it from a Christian perspective? If not, how do I become better at this stuff?

"Networking" is the practice of building relationships for mutual gain. As a marketing guy, I do this daily – even hourly. It's my job to do lunch, to work rooms, to make valuable contacts and to then use those contacts to close deals.

Sound unctuous? It can be. A lot of Christians are uncomfortable with the practice because it seems so selfish. It seems to be exclusively about advancing our own agenda. About being slick and surreptitious. Or, less pejoratively, about using the contacts we have for self-promotion.

Much of networking is actually that way, as it's practiced in the world. But I'd maintain that there's nothing inherently immoral about networking. It's a tool, like a hammer is a tool, and tools are value-neutral. They can be used for good or for evil, for building a house or for hitting someone over the head. So the question then becomes: "How can we use networking for *good*?"

Here's how. Let's say you're walking into a party, or into some industry conference. You have a critical choice to make at the door. If you walk in thinking: "How can I serve other people and how can I advance God's Kingdom?" then you're ready to network in a way that honors God. That is, you're in a position to establish strategic relationships that help people and organizations meet their full potential. Alternatively, if your mind-set is: "How can I serve myself?" you're then at risk of using people to meet your quotas or reach other pragmatic ends. Consequently, you'll probably act like every other networking aficionado out there – objectifying people, cheapening God's children, perhaps marring the cause of Christ in the process.

This might sound like a subtle or even semantic distinction to you, but recognize that the implications of your attitude toward people are enormous. That attitude will ultimately determine whether others see God in and through you. Moreover, the attitude you choose may also determine your success as a networker. Sure, you can make contacts and close deals with a self-serving mind-set. It happens every day. But with a servant's mind-set, you build more than short-term business and an overweight Rolodex. You build friendships – genuine, trusting relationships that blossom into new business, long-term business, and an even broader network, since people tend to refer those of empathy and integrity.

What might this "servant-oriented" networking look like in operation? Let me offer you some practical tips from my years of palm-pressing and card swapping.

- Before you enter any networking situation – a meeting, a social gathering, whatever – start with prayer. Pray to be led to people whom God wants you to meet and pray for the humility to see those people as God does, not as means to an end.
- Take a genuine interest in the person with whom you are speaking. Care about what she cares about. Get to know her and seek ways that you can truly serve her. One way to

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communicate this is to be authentically direct. Ask: “How can I serve you?” or, in Christian circles, “How can I be a blessing to you?” Caution, though. If you don’t mean it, that will likely be transparent. So mean it.

- Relatedly, look for common ground. I often identify this through mutual acquaintances, shared interests, and general observation of the person. For example, when I walk into someone’s office, I look at the walls and bookshelves for clues of what this common ground might be.
- Learn to ask open-ended questions. An example: “How has your company addressed the challenge of ____?” That allows the other person some space to talk, rather than to offer mere one-word answers, as if he were on the witness stand.
- Use the “tell me – sell me” approach. Ask the person to tell you about himself or his business before offering the services you have. Look for the real door that God is opening for service, instead of predetermining the door you’d like to kick open. And if you find that there isn’t a door at all, don’t ever go through a wall to make one.
- Make good notes after the meeting. Don’t rely on memory alone. You’ll serve people better if you scribe their actual needs.
- Follow-up and follow-through with details. I’m convinced that this is where most would-be networkers fail. Set up a system to follow-up with your contacts. Also, be sure to follow through on any promises you made. Doing the “little things” is often the difference between adequate and excellent.
- Become an information junkie. Information is a vital and powerful commodity and it will enable you to become truly skilled at networking. The more you know, the better you can serve.
- Lastly, pray after your meetings as well as before them. Bracketing your networking time this way will help safeguard you from the ubiquitous temptation to abuse the process for personal gain.

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Ten Practical Tips to Networking

Professional Networking Seminar
Mark Begly, MBA

1. Know and understand your values.
2. Take a genuine interest in the other person.
3. Know the goal of your meeting.
4. Learn to ask good questions (open ended).
5. Look for the common ground (relationships, interests, six degrees of separation).
6. Tell me – sell me approach.
7. Play to your strengths (what interests you, what are you good at).
8. Make good notes after meetings.
9. Follow-up and follow-through with details.
10. Become an information junkie.

Recommended book: *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*. Harvey Mackay

Networking

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