



3 Common Networking Mistakes

-by Bob Salvas

Why do people network? If I had to answer that with one word, that word would be OPPORTUNITIES. People are looking for opportunities when they network. Now that can mean different things to different people. It could be they are looking for a promotion; it could be they are looking for a new job; it could be that they are looking to start a new business; or it could be they are looking for referrals for the business that they are already in.

Whatever your endgame is for networking, you will NOT be successful at it if you do it incorrectly. Here are three very common networking mistakes I have seen many new networkers make over the years:

- 1- NOT NETWORKING ENOUGH**
- 2- SELLING INSTEAD OF NETWORKING**
- 3- FAILING TO FOLLOW-UP**

Let's look at all three mistakes and I'll share three things to help in overcoming each one.

1- NOT NETWORKING ENOUGH

CALENDAR- Some people network only when they have time. The truth is you must **MAKE** time to network. This frequently means you must build it into your calendar like any other business appointment. And, like any other appointment you make, you must honor your commitments.

CONSISTENCE- When you are adding networking to your calendar, make sure you have enough networking events each month. You should average at least 5 events per month (about one per week) or more. Remember that networking is **NOT** just the business after hours official networking that you might be thinking of. You can belong to a regular referral group or have a booth at an expo or attend a class or conference that allows time for networking. Even a nonprofit event can be a great place to network.

CONNECTING- When I was part of a referral group in my early networking days, I did not have as much success as I wanted and a friend advised me to also network in different places with different people. The idea, he said, was to become a 'connector of people'. If you routinely network in say, three different circles, you can now connect someone from one circle to someone in another circle. If you just network in one place, it is more difficult. Once you become that connector, you will find that people will actively look to connect you to others! Your networking goes to the next level when you become a true connector.

2- SELLING INSTEAD OF NETWORKING

COMMON GROUND- The idea of networking (as opposed to selling) is to build a relationship with the people you network with and eventually you will get some of the opportunities that those people have to offer (like referrals). You can build a relationship quicker by finding common ground- what do you have in common with the person you are talking to? If you work in different industries, you may have to ask more non-business questions to find that common ground. But don't be afraid to do so. Many business alliances have been formed from a shared hobby. You've probably heard a bunch of stories about all the deals made on a golf course? The reason is common ground.

COMMUNICATE (about a third person)- When you are networking, people will ultimately ask you what you do. It is important to illustrate that by referring to a third person (who is not there). You might say, "I work with people who are new to the trades in Rhode Island and help them become a more successful business." You should NEVER say, "I help people like YOU to become a more successful business." That is SELLING, not NETWORKING. Paint them a picture of who you truly help and who knows, they might even know someone who fits that description!

CONTRIBUTE- If everyone who went to a networking event wanted to GET something and not GIVE anything, all the people there would come home disappointed. Remember, networking IS relationship building. One powerful way to do that is to be a GIVER. You can give people advice or opportunities, or you can connect them to others (remember being a connector of people?). The more you give (without expectation of anything in return), the more people will want to give to YOU.

3- FAILURE TO FOLLOW-UP

CONTACT- You should always follow up with people you meet or talk to within a day or so of meeting them. It is also a good idea to ask them their preference in HOW they would like you to follow up with them. People have schedules and communication preferences so the more you can accommodate them, the better chance for a response.

CONNECT- At some point after the initial follow-up, see if you can connect to the people you met on social media. This gives you another touchpoint with them. Again, just like their preferences for following up, it can be helpful to know which social media platforms they frequent. It is a safe bet to start with LINKED IN, but they might also be active on Facebook or Instagram or others.

CONTINUE (to communicate)- Dan Kennedy once said you lose 10% of your influence with people every time you go over 30 days without communicating with them. So, stay in touch with people long term but do so with VALUE. Constantly selling in your communications will cause people to ignore you.

Remember:

"Networking is more about farming than it is about hunting."

- Dr Ivan Misner

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