

The 3 Absolute Essentials of Networking

-by Bob Salvas

The three absolute essentials of marketing can be perfectly summed up by a quote I first heard from sales and leadership expert Shelley Potente:

"Show up, speak up, and follow-up."

Let's dive deeper to understand the nuances of each of these 3 absolute essentials:

SHOW UP- We've all heard the famous saying that 80% of success is just showing up. There is a lot of truth in that, but we do need to understand that we also need to show up *often over time* and we need to have a good *attitude* when we do show up. Showing up at every networking event in January and then not showing up at any other events until NEXT January is, well, NOT really showing up. And if you do show up a lot but are always in a bad mood, that is not going to get you very far either!

"Showing up is essential. Showing up consistently is powerful. Showing up consistently with a positive outlook is even more powerful."

-Jeff Olson

SPEAK UP- This one is a little trickier. I have never been a fan of the "elevator pitch". To me, it is just too much like a sales call and networking is not about sales. Networking should be more natural. There are 3 things we should strive for in our conversations at networking events:

1. *CONNECT*- Building a relationship with someone is the goal in networking. But building a relationship takes time. That time can be shortened if you can find common ground: something you can connect on, something you have in common. That is why a ton of business is done on a golf course, and that is why you shouldn't JUST talk about business at a networking event. You can

talk about hobbies, interests, events or just what's going on in your life right now. You have more in common with others than you think!

2. *CONTRIBUTE*- You should always ask more questions than you answer. The idea is to be genuinely curious about other people. Ask questions and listen to the answers. Then see how you can GIVE them something that might help them. It could be advice, or it might be someone you know that is a great connection for that person.
3. *CONCISE*- At some point in the conversation, you will have to speak about your business, but rather than giving a canned elevator speech answer, let them know SPECIFICALLY who you help and how you help them. When you paint a picture of a specific person you have helped, it can cause the listener to think of people they know who also fit that description.

"For the rest of us, the Elevator Pitch is a crock. It's a bad idea. Real humans have back-and-forth conversations. We don't blast other people with the audio versions of our business cards."

– Liz Ryan

FOLLOW-UP- It never fails. People do great networking consistently for a good amount of time and come away with very little business. The reason for that is almost always that they have not done good follow-up. The statistics on this are crazy. Roughly half the people don't follow up and of those who do, roughly 70% send one single email. That MIGHT lead somewhere but most success is found after multiple follow-ups. Here are 3 quick tips on following up:

Make sure you have business cards and exchange them with people you want to follow up with (yes, having a good business card is STILL important in networking!).

Ask the person you want to follow up with how they prefer you follow up with them (email, phone, text, etc.). Then follow up that way.

When following up more than once, be sure to talk about non-business things (and you will know what to talk about if you CONNECTED with them and found some common ground).

"The fortune is in the follow-up. Always has been."

-Peter Holberg

So, always remember the 3 essentials: **"Show up, speak up, and follow-up."** Do all three things in the right way and consistently over time and your networking success will follow!

NOTE: There are three big annual events that take place in the month of November that local small businesses should support and/or participate in. November 10th is the Ocean State Business Expo (oceanstatebusinessexpo.com), November 16th is the Businesses Give Back Toys for Tots event (businessesgiveback.com), and November 28th is the Small Business Saturday event (sbsshopri.com). All will be excellent networking opportunities for small businesses.

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