

## **“Networking for all”**

by

Alex Fletcher.

Having read Heather Townsend’s book “Business Networking” I have taken up the challenge of informing all who read Clerksroom’s newsletter about the benefits of effective networking that she extolls.

I have kindly been granted permission to Précis her book in this newsletter and hope to raise awareness of what this often resisted and misunderstood business practice can do for those wishing to increase their business profile and turnover. Heather Townsend has also kindly provided me with a copy of her book to give away to one of our readers.

I welcome hearing from anyone who is in at all inspired by the idea of networking or indeed from anyone who believes that networking could help them in their work.

I hope therefore that you find these précis useful and informative and that you manage to apply some of the principles of networking that I will be outlining for you (courtesy of Heather Townsend), I have no doubt that they will raise your profile and increase the market’s awareness of your presence.

### **Chapter 3.**

#### **“Behave like a great networker”**

Chapter 2 considered the four ingredients needed to consistently generate opportunities via networking. The key to developing these is attitude.

Networking is often thought of as akin to selling, i.e. selling yourself and your services to others. This is not a helpful attitude as “selling” will have the adverse effect to that sought by networkers. Chapter 3 explains the best and most effective attitudes to networking that lead to increased business opportunities and wider recognition of you and your services / company.

#### **1. Selflessness and Generosity:**

The belief that work is abundant is essential to networking. This attitude reduces the aggressive work hunting attitude that damages credibility and puts people off from speaking with you or recommending you to others. The attitude of being willing to help others for no perceived reason or reward is most likely to instil in those that have been assisted the belief in your credibility and increase your social capital. The chances are that opportunities will not come directly from those that have been assisted but from someone they know or someone they have recommended you to. It is therefore difficult to quantify the usefulness of this attitude but those who practice it often credit a reasonable percentage of their new work or referrals to the assistance they have offered others.

## **2. Interest in people not getting their business:**

Being interested in the person you are networking with is significantly more successful in terms of business generation than only showing an interest in telling them what you can do for them or single mindedly drawing information from them about what it is they could do for you. Networking is more about getting to know people than it is about selling or buying. Introductions upon meeting people for the first time (face to face or online) will often immediately dictate the level of success the exchange will have in networking terms. This is not to say that any conversation should not be about business, but overt examination of the contact to ascertain their ability to provide you with immediate work rather than considering it as an opportunity to foster a working relationship for any time in the future, should (in most circumstances) be considered as a networking failure.

## **3. Positivity.**

Positive attitudes attract people. This stands to reason. No one wants to listen to negativity for any length of time. If you are positive, upbeat and excited about potential opportunities that you or others can provide you will be exuding an attractive characteristic that will draw people and hence business to you.

## **4. Focus and discipline.**

Networking without a purpose is time wasted. Targeting groups and organisations with whom to network will increase your access to your target market, increasing your exposure, visibility and potentially your credibility within the area of practice/ work you wish to gain work from. Goals and targets can be set to ensure that you are disciplined and focused. *Business Networking* records that some set themselves goals of physically meeting 10 new persons a month with whom they may do business with.

## **5. Being brave.**

No one should be seen as too senior or too important to be contacted by you. Most people in positions of responsibility or authority are quite willing to have a conversation with anyone that asks them. The best of networkers seem to have no fear and are prepared to introduce themselves to any person they want to meet.

## **6. Commitment:**

Referrals or recommendations that come to you are a sign that someone is trusting in you and your work. It is important to maintain your commitments to others. Where you have said you are able to provide a service you must provide it. Failure to do so will adversely affect the person who has recommended you as they may be seen as a bad judge of character / business but it will certainly be adverse to your future business prospects.

## **7. Experimentation:**

Networking is an ever changing activity. It is important to keep pace with changes and to allow your networking practice to evolve rather than continue with a tried and tested method regardless of social change.

## 8. Tenacity.

Networking activity should be a consistent practice and not just a tool for crisis management. It is not an activity that is likely to pay dividends in the short term and considering it a practice to adopt when business is slow and needs a rapid boost is a failure to understand the nature of networking. It should be considered as a practice that, over time, will pay huge dividends to those with patience and tenacity in building their network.

I hope that the above has been of interest. Next month's chapter précis is: "Online and Face-to-face networking options explored".

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Heather Townsend's book "Business Networking" (ISBN 978-1-292-00395-5) is published by FT Publishing and can be found on Amazon at: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Financial-Times-Guide-Business-Networking/dp/1292003952/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1442228355&sr=1-2&keywords=business+networking](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Financial-Times-Guide-Business-Networking/dp/1292003952/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1442228355&sr=1-2&keywords=business+networking).