

Habits of effective networkers



I wonder if, like me, one of your new year's resolutions was to put **more energy into your networking**, to be more strategic in nurturing all those contacts you've accumulated over years of being on LinkedIn, and to generally be more active with everyone you meet.

As the calendar turns its first page, now is a good a moment to stop and revisit your resolution, **check your progress** and **fine-tune the plan**.

I've spent many years working in financial sales and the last six training and coaching professionals of all sorts, many of whom work in sales. I've gathered together a toolkit of best practices that I believe lay the foundations for getting more out of your networking, and ultimately building your business.

In this blog I share my top three tips for achieving greater networking success.

Adopt a networking MINDSET



What does that mean? We all know that some days we just aren't in the mood. My advice, if you have the option, don't network on those days (understanding, of course, that there will always be days when you are scheduled to attend an event and you have to go).

If you're not in the right mindset, you're unlikely to make a strong first impression, and for sure you won't maximise the opportunities standing in front you.

So, what is a networking mindset? For me its two things, it's **GIVING** and **CURIOS**.

I strongly believe that the right way to approach networking is not **what can I get out of the people I meet?** But, **what can I bring to the people I meet?** Give freely with no expectation of return.

In his book *Pre-suasion*, Robert Cialdini references the "rule of reciprocity", that human beings feel compelled to repay or reciprocate when they receive something, be that a material gift, a kind deed, words of advice or a connection to another.

Approach everyone you meet with **genuine curiosity**, be interested in the person, ask questions, listen and give the other the space to talk. Let's face it, most of us like to talk about ourselves (some a little more than others) so let the people you meet talk.

Be **CURIOUS** about the opportunity in everyone you meet, explore that opportunity by gently directing the conversation with your fluid questioning. Before you know it, you'll have discovered so much about the other person. Adopt the 1/3, 2/3 rule, speak for a 1/3 of the time and listen for 2/3.

When I say "fluid", your questions shouldn't sound like an interview. The model to replicate is how you talk with your friends. We share things in common with our friends and this is often the glue that sticks us together, those combined with an ongoing interest in their lives.

Your job in networking is to discover the "glue" that will connect you to the people you meet on your "networking travels".

Have a plan



The best networkers and business developers I've worked with are the ones who are systematic and have a strategic plan. Theirs is a targeted approach, they plan who they want to meet and work out the most effective way(s) to get introduced, and ultimately to meet those people. They research who will be at an event by first getting hold of the guest list and working out who they'd like to meet and why.

It sounds simple but so many people forget to start with a simple Google search, and if it's a company you're searching for remember to check the latest news too to get the most up-to-date information.

LinkedIn or other global equivalents are great starting points, with over 380 million members in over 200 countries, the platform is a goldmine of opportunities. Some of my clients also use sites such as [Xing](#) and [The Go To Market Company](#).

Many people have said to me that LinkedIn is of only use when they're looking for jobs and while I agree that it's a great resource for job hunting, there's so much more to discover. If you are interested in networking, then LinkedIn should be a huge part of your strategy.

This week a client of mine reminded me of the power of upgrading to [LinkedIn Navigator](#). It “allows sales professionals to research and nurture potential targets and, importantly, uncover valuable insights that help them gain a better understanding of prospects, and with that, to optimize the opportunity to deliver these insights at the most opportune time in the sales cycle”.

In short, Navigator gives you the hooks to use when networking and prospecting. If you’re serious about networking to grow your business then it’s definitely worth a look.

FOCUS ON MAKING AN IMPACT



It’s all about the first impression you make when you walk into the room, what you say, how you greet the people you meet, the first words that come out of your mouth.

Research tells us that it takes as little as one-tenth of a second for us to judge someone and make a first impression. Not only are we quick to form first impressions, but once made these first impressions are made it becomes the filter through which others see and hear us.

I'm sure you've all seen [Amy Cuddy's Ted Talk](#) and get the science behind checking your posture, standing tall and the potential impact of Amy's *Power Posing*. So the next time you walk into a room to network, check yourself before, stand tall, push your shoulders back, smile and walk in with confidence. That said, take care not to overwhelm anyone you meet, remember that we're all wired differently.

You'll need a good dose of "emotional intelligence" (EQ) to quickly read the room and subtly adapt your approach to the characters you meet. Daniel Goleman, an internationally known psychologist, is widely famed for popularising the conversation around EQ.

Goleman has written some great material on the subject and I'd highly recommend his book [Emotional Intelligence](#) as well as Harvard Business Review's [10 Must Reads on Emotional Intelligence](#). You'll pick up some easy to learn tips on developing your EQ.

Make sure that you're prepared to make the very best first impression when you walk into the room. If you choose one thing to prepare, make it the first few minutes. How will you behave? What will you say?

Networking takes time. You need the right mindset, a plan and the ability to walk into a room and create a strong first impression. While this might sound like a lot of hard work, and it is, the rewards for you, your network and your company are bottomless.



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Gareth is both Advanced DISC and Hogan Assessment Suite certified and uses these tools to help

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