

Networking Best Practices

Networking is absolutely critical for your business. It may be something you dread, and yes, it can be time-consuming. For many it can be down right awkward. And when your calendar is already full with client appointments, work, and family commitments, networking becomes less of a priority.

However, when you come to the realization that your “*network is your net-worth*” you will wish you had been building it ages ago. The power of a strong network will give you the competitive edge throughout every stage of your business.

Networking really isn't complex. It is purely the exchange of information with others for the purposes of establishing long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships.

Networking opportunities exist everywhere, and it may not be the person you are talking to directly that you may need or that may need you, it could be deeper into their network, or someone they know they can introduce you to.

Whether you are new to networking or a pro, review and refresh your networking capabilities with these best practices.

Preparing to Network

When you think of preparing to network, what comes to mind?

1. You need to understand WHAT your value proposition is.

What do you offer best? Or what are your best services? Become really clear on your offerings and the messaging to present them.

2. Know WHO you best serve.

What industry? What is the title of the person?

Being able to concisely prepare who you serve and what you offer is most important before even walking into a networking room.

Strategic Relationships

In order to maximize your time, it's important to do research on the types of networking groups that your ideal partners, clients, and prospects might also attend. Be sure that you are walking into a room where you can add value as well as where others there can add value to your time – strategic relationships!

When you are at a networking event and leading a conversation, make it about the other person. Be curious and ask questions. Curiosity is so important. Try to understand what they do best. What is their value proposition? Who do they



serve? Find ways that YOU can help THEM. And hopefully, in return, they will ask the same of you (be clear and concise in your answer!). It is a powerful question...how can I help you?

The bottom-line philosophy is win-win. Always understand that you are positioning yourself to ensure that you are able to help others and fill your bucket at the same time. It is important to note that you must be fulfilled. You must be coming from a place of abundance, to help other people. So, it is important to keep that balance of filling your bucket. Making sure that you are getting what you need, but at the same time, pouring into other people.

Know Your 30-Seconds

When it comes to telling others what you are hoping to gain, it is important to keep it concise; 30 seconds or less is best.

1. What you offer (your value proposition).
2. Who you need to meet (include industry type, business type, the decision maker you need to speak with to maximize your time).

During open networking time, you should be having short conversations. Knowing the type of decision-maker you need to talk to is critical to maximizing your time and helping to prevent from getting pigeonholed into just one connection the entire time. You should be connecting with at least three people, using these short conversations as the START and filter for next steps.

Follow-Up

Once you have made your connections, you can follow-up in order to help them move forward on their goals or to add value to their life. Be sure to prepare before you go to a networking event. Have a business card or something prepared with your contact information to give to people that you meet.

You can go out network all day, but if you do not have follow up opportunities, then you are really missing the boat.

Now, it is especially important to schedule time after each of your networking functions for follow up. Be sure to block out a 30-minute session for follow up on your leads. Be specific about why you are following up, thank that person for their time and conversation, ensuring that you will get back within 48 hours.

The bottom line is, pay it forward! How can I help you move forward with your goals? In return, others will want to do the exact same thing. Follow up to maximize your results. Follow the process and you will start to see results!



About Rainmakers

Rainmakers is a National business development organization for business to business (B2B) companies. We support thousands of entrepreneurial and sales-oriented professionals to reach their revenue and growth goals.

Rainmakers started in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2002 and while our roots started in the Indy community, we have expanded Nationally. We host, both live and virtual, professional networking events, business-focused educational sessions, roundtable discussions, summits, and community service projects. Additionally, we serve our customers with business development focused consulting services including: social media management; multi-media services; business development outsourcing; sales training; and business strategy and coaching.

Our Vision is to be the TOP national networking organization in the \$10M and under B2B market where business owners and professionals come to thrive in their business.

Contact us today at connect@gorainmakers.com to start your membership and grow your business.