



UNIT-9

Networking for Success

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Introduce yourself in a meaningful, memorable way, even if you've never worked on an elevator pitch before
- ✓ Be goal focused about networking so that you make the most of events you attend
- ✓ Apply the concept of give first and be helpful as part of a system of reciprocity
- ✓ Use strategy and systems in order to network effectively
- ✓ Leverage the availability and usefulness of the Internet, including LinkedIn and Twitter

Unit 9

Networking for Success

Assessing Your Networking Skills

Networking Dynamics

Don't let yourself think that networking is just about making connections and building your relationships, because while that may be how we do it, it's not the honest reason for why we do it. Business networking is a strategy used in sales and marketing to extend our reach and obtain referrals, introductions, and ultimately, sell our products and services.

A solid business network, whether it is of 50 businesses that you can do business with, or 200 or 1000, is your path to getting your goods and services to market. The physical and relationship nature of networking allows you to reach decisions makers more effectively and with deeper relationships than more traditional kinds of advertising. It also includes the advantage of personal introductions, referrals, and recommendations, which make the development of those business opportunities even stronger.

Business networking uses the same principles that you find throughout sales, management, coaching, and facilitating techniques. They are heavily dosed in common sense and require a commitment to relationship building.

Are You Committed?

Self-Assessment

You wouldn't be here in this workshop if you weren't committed to getting better at networking. Everyone is here to learn something to help them get ahead.

The list below includes 10 principles for networking success. Rate yourself on each point, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "not as effective as I could be" and 5 is "more effective than anyone else I know."

Statement	Rating
I have a quick, efficient, compelling elevator speech (your 15-30 second introduction).	
I differentiate myself from my competition.	
I am committed to serving/helping others.	
I operate with high integrity.	
I am targeting my ideal client.	
I attend networking events with a goal in mind.	
I do my follow up on time every time.	
I have a positive demeanor at all times.	
I am focused, ready, and diligent.	
I have a high degree of product knowledge and confidence in what I am selling.	

Identifying Opportunities and Customizing Your Approach

Creating Opportunities

Differentiating Yourself

If there is no real difference between you and the competition, people have no reason to work with you and will go off in search of someone else. It really is that simple. In order to get people interested in you and what you have to offer, you've got to appeal to them by being somehow a little different than your competitors, and to stand out. This is your opportunity to differentiate.

Whether you offer something of added value, you do it in a different way, deliver it with more aplomb, or whatever it happens to be, if there is no real difference between what you and a competitor offers, you will have to find a way to create something. Doing so is part of what will allow you to connect to people when you are networking. Conducting a little research ahead of time also means that you are able to pre-qualify prospects you will meet at a networking event, and to come up with something that might appeal to them.

Preparing to Network

When you are preparing for a networking event, try to scope out who will be there. If it's only people you know already, think of it as a social event instead of networking. Don't go where all your friends are if you want to meet new people. Target places where you can meet people, connect with them, and learn about them. You should keep in mind that you are not selling to people at a networking event; you are meeting and connecting with them. Your purpose is not necessarily to meet your target market at a networking event (save that for the trade shows).

When you are able to clearly articulate what you do, and what your differentiation is, and you can do so confidently, and you can demonstrate your integrity and ability, the members of your network will either want to do business with you or refer you to people they know.

Don't aimlessly attend every networking meeting or join every association that you come across. Try to find networks that already exist and are functioning effectively or have strong potential.

Key Questions

Here are some key things to ask about networks that you are exploring.

- o Do members already refer one another?
- o Do they meet regularly?
- o Do people commit to doing follow up?
- o Does the group offer relevance to the members or visitors?
- o Do they operate with a high degree of integrity?

Keep in mind that in order to fit in, you need to be able to help them to succeed as well as having them help you.

Things to Consider

When you are planning to network, things to consider include:

- o Geography: Are you local, regional, or global? What is the focus of that particular network?
- o Size: Can you meet enough people over time?
- o Industry/Sector: If you are selling paper, you need people who know people who will use paper.
- o Demographics: Are things like age, ethnicity, gender, and seniority reflective of your target market?
- o Political or religious affiliations
- o Academic or career affiliations
- o Additional areas of common interest: Consider the shopping local movement, slow food, technology, fair trade, environmental, etc.

Customizing Your Approach

You have to plan your networking so that you can manage it. The first thing to do is realize that business networking is part of your marketing strategy, which means that all activities come from your marketing budget. Marketing benefits from directed, focused activity, which exists to:

- o Create awareness about what you have to offer
- o Build relationships so that, ultimately, sales are made

While you are at a networking event – and even in line for coffee – it is of great importance that you can answer very direct questions about what you do. You will be asked by potential clients and referral sources, so you need to be ready to deliver a clear, concise answer that supports you being a credible resource, and someone either they or their friend might want to do business with.

Set up some targets and measures for networking, and then monitor your results. Since business networking can also be a lot of fun, make sure you keep your desired results and cost-effectiveness in mind. If you are

spending half your marketing budget (no matter what size it is) on networking and have no results, then you have just misspent half of your marketing budget.

You also need to be open to unplanned networking opportunities, which can come up at any time. Everyone out there has a life just like you do, and they travel, shop, and get in lineups, just like you do. You will be able to make the most of these unplanned situations if you are open to them, you make eye contact and say hello to people, take initiative and start conversations, appear friendly and approachable.

To capitalize on unplanned networking, make sure you always have a pen (or a phone where you can record a note) and business cards with you.

Although this will surprise some people, the best way for you to network is NOT to give out as many business cards or brochures as possible. Being purposeful about networking means that you do NOT recite your sales pitch to everyone you meet, nor do you ask a stranger to give you their business. Instead, being purposeful means that you build relationships, you work to become a helpful contributor to the group, and then allow the introductions and referrals to come to you.

How can you contribute to a networking group?

Creating a Positive First Impression

Body Language

We are always communicating and sending signals to others, even if we are not speaking.

What are some elements of body language?

Interpreting Body Language

Typically, body language has been used by a listener to confirm whether the body is sending the same signal as what the speaker is saying. Our experience with neuro linguistic programming (NLP) can help us take this further, by allowing us to use body language to help sensitize us to the speaker's state. NLP suggests that rather than simply making assumptions based on body language, we can use body language as cues to help us adjust our behavior to better connect with others and understand their thinking processes.

Let's look at some different states of mind and how we might recognize them.

Associated or Dissociated

Is the person you are communicating with involved in the conversation or somewhere else? Do they see themselves from an internal perspective or as if they were outside themselves?

People who are **associated** (tuned into things):

- Usually lean forward
- Are often animated, using gestures and imagery
- Might include more emotions in the conversation

People who are **dissociated** (tuned out of themselves or the conversation):

- Usually lean backwards
- Use fewer gestures and practical language
- Often have a more objective approach

Both of these states can be useful. If you are facilitating mediation between two staff who are arguing, and where you must be neutral, a dissociated state might be useful. However, if you're meeting someone new at a networking event, an associated state will be more appropriate.

Towards or Away From

This state reflects whether we are looking towards what we want to achieve, or away from the goal and at a problem that we are facing. In the **Away From** state, we are often tense and negative, thinking of the challenges that we are facing. In a **towards** state, people are typically more relaxed with positive body language.

Match / Mismatch

We all have a natural tendency towards antagonism or co-operation and friendliness. Those who naturally

match the environment around them can also often easily create rapport. They might naturally fall into the same body language patterns as the person that they are communicating with. They almost always try to build people up and support people.

People who try to find the differences in others usually fall into body language and speech patterns that are opposite of the person that they are communicating with. They might use expressions like:

- o At odds with
- o On the other hand
- o Devil's advocate

Summary

These methods won't guarantee an instant shift in how many people you meet or the quality of those relationships, but they should help you get yourself (or the person that you're communicating with) in the right frame of mind to achieve results.

Be a Conduit

Being a People Person

People are drawn to people who are positive, confident, and likeable. Make sure that you project these attributes (not just while networking, but that's our focus here) in order to attract the right kind of people to you. Whether you are networking to sell a product, to expand the number of people you know, or attending dating events, your positive attitude, confidence, and likeability will help you get noticed. People are not likely to approach you and start a conversation if you are quietly standing in a corner with a drink in your hand. Even if you are not really feeling terribly social on a particular day, if you attend a networking event you'll need to set aside fatigue, insecurity, or awkwardness to make the most of the opportunity.

Getting Your Message Out

Many networking events allow one or two people to do a presentation, and it's a good strategy to get yourself on the presentation schedule. Not only does it help you demonstrate your confidence and competence about what you do, it serves as your introduction to the entire room. Make sure that you understand how the group works, since some groups are more sales/information focused, and others will be turned off by a hard sell from the front of the room.

Be a Conduit!

Being a conduit means you understand how to:

- o **Connect:** Introduce yourself to people, and then introduce those connections to other people they can benefit from meeting.

- o **Open** yourself up to new opportunities that come from meeting people and learning about them.
 - o **Nurture** these relationships.
 - o **Direct** your attention toward others and how you can help them.
 - o **Understand** that others may not be as effective as networking as you. Be kind to them.
 - o Interest yourself in what's going on and who you are meeting.
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- o Treat everyone as if they have something to offer, and a message worth hearing.

What can you do specifically to demonstrate being a conduit while networking?

Pre-Assignment Review

When you meet someone new, in person or over the phone, what is the first thing you notice about them?

- o Face, eyes, overall dress and deportment (when meeting in person)
- o Vocal tone, pace, and warmth (when connecting over the phone)

Why do you suppose you notice that specific thing?

- o Watching/listening to determine whether they are trustworthy or genuine
- o Watching for positive signs that I might like this person or what they have to say
- o Focusing on a negative element so I can object, interrupt, or let my attention wander

Do you have a technique for remembering names?

- o If not, check out the next session!

REMEMBERING NAMES

Why Name Recall is an Important Skill

There are several techniques for remembering people's names, and the key is to use whatever works for you. You may find that a particular technique works in some instances (like when you also get a business card) but not in others (especially if you are in more casual surroundings). Most people love to hear their own name, and when someone new to us remembers our name, it makes us pay attention.

Avoid the temptation to say that you are horrible at remembering names. This can give off two not-so-subtle messages:

- o You are not important, and therefore I won't make an effort to remember your name.
- o I don't care if I ever meet you again or not.

Instead, make a conscious decision to get good at learning names. If you do not have a great track record for remembering names, let that change now. Stop telling people (and yourself!) that you never remember names. Plant the idea in your subconscious that you are fantastic at remembering names and you remember people all the time!

Repeat Their Name

When you meet someone new, repeat their name out loud, and look into their eyes as you do so to connect them to their name. If you can repeat the name, the likelihood of remembering it increases tremendously.

Try questions like:

- o "Did I pronounce it correctly?"
- o "Could you repeat your name for me?"
- o "How do you spell your name?"

Sometimes we are talking with people but very distracted and we aren't even trying to remember their name. Instead, focus on the person or people you are speaking with, and then repeat their name within the conversation. For example: "Doug, it's nice to meet you. What do you think of this subject?"

When Doug answers, use his name in your reply, like this: "It's great to hear what other people are thinking about that, Doug. I'm curious to hear what you think will happen next."

Be sure to use their name at the end of your conversation. For example, "Daria, it was a pleasure to meet you today. "

Write It Down

This is a great technique used by sales people, and it's available for the rest of us too! When you meet someone, write their name down as soon as you can, along with a trigger to help remind you who they are. You can do this in a paper or electronic notebook. Keep a list of new people that you meet and then review it from time to time.

This is really helpful when you start a new job and are meeting lots of people, move

into a new neighborhood, or when you are consciously networking. As well, try to tie the name to something memorable.

Here are some examples:

- o “Michael, tall, 30th birthday today, drives a 1984 Volvo and brush painted it teal.”
- o “Andrea, wore red dress with large elephant pendant (pewter?), and says red is her faaaavorite color.”
- o “Kim, arrived early and helped with set up. Has a book collection that includes two bedrooms and two e-readers. Likes cats. Has four.”

When you are at a networking meeting or conference and meeting lots of people, have a page set up to record names. When you meet someone new, add them to your list on that page along with your description. At the end of the day, review the list and recall each person’s face so that you are matching them together in your memory.

Spell It Out

Playing with the spelling of someone’s name is a good way to help it stick in your memory. Have them spell their name for you, simply by asking, “How do you spell your name?” This gives you time to register their name again, and then once more as you repeat the letters back to them. Don’t worry if this feels a bit awkward or silly. If you genuinely want to learn someone’s name, they typically appreciate it.

As you write down or speak each letter, imagine it moving just a little. It might bounce or shake a bit, but whatever move you have it do will help it click into your memory. You could also picture yourself writing it on an old fashioned blackboard, or painting it on a billboard above their photo.

Word Play

Use mnemonic devices to connect people to their names. Things like “Charles from church” or “Neil from Newark” can be very helpful.

Confess!

If you recognize someone and have forgotten their name, admit it. We have a lot of stimulus around us all the time. As well, some networking events are terrible for noise and distractions. Avoid being embarrassed and just be honest and say, “It’s been great to talk with you and I can’t believe it, but I have forgotten your name.” The knowledge that you are making the effort to connect usually makes this only a minor problem.

Your Memorable Intro

The Basics

Your Elevator Pitch

We often call that 30-second introduction so common in networking an “elevator pitch” because it should be short enough that you can say it in a brief elevator ride when someone asks, “And what do you do?” While the exercise can be nerve wracking for the uninitiated, it can also be the ideal opportunity for you to share what you have to offer.

Whether you call it an elevator pitch, a sticky story, or something else, we want your introduction to be memorable, too. Being memorable means that you are not just relying on the standard introduction, although we are going to learn about that too. When you create your unforgettable introduction, your first task is to decide what you need to convey.

A Basic Format

Step	Description	Examples
State your name	Be genuinely sincere about meeting new people. Look them in the eye, stand confidently, and be engaged in the conversation.	“Nice to meet you, my name is...”
State your business name	Don’t wait for a compliment or accolade, and don’t ask “have you heard of us?” Just make a statement.	“My company is...” or “I work for...”
If relevant, include where you operate	This part of the introduction depends on the networking meeting. If you are at an international meeting or conference or work globally, it may not be relevant.	“I look after the Northwest” or “I am based in Dubai.”
Make it meaningful and memorable	Be meaningful in the context of the event or group you are in, and be meaningful to the person you are meeting. Talk about what you offer in terms of positive outcomes instead of focusing on generic or technical details, and be someone they can remember. Be proud and	

	positive in your approach. You can also include your ambition and desired results from network contacts.	
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Sample Introductions

Lots of networking situations give you 30 seconds or even a minute to speak. In those situations everyone is taking a turn, so you need to be able to convey your message memorably and invitingly so interested people are encouraged to approach you afterward and start a conversation. A long, unfocused statement shows a lack of preparation or experience. Be concise, warm, and inviting, and most of all be memorable.

The Trainer

As a trainer, I could say this: “My name is Jeanie Frank, and I work for Worldwide Business Solutions as a leadership trainer.”

While that introduction meets the rules for brevity, it’s not that interesting, and it certainly isn’t memorable. Instead we want you to really think about what will draw someone in to conversation with you. You could try working in a valuable, memorable anecdote, or celebrate someone else’s success, like this:

“My name is Jeanie Frank and I work with Worldwide Business Solutions, where we provide leadership training for the newly appointed as well as those in senior and longstanding positions. In a leadership course last Wednesday, a participant said that he had no idea a short, custom, leadership course could stretch his frame of reference so significantly, and help him to leave the third day already a better, faster, and stronger leader.”

In this example, Jeanie has worked in some memorable story plus highlighted features of her training: the training is for leaders of all kinds of experience levels, that she can provide customized training, and that they get big results. And, she did it by offering an actual anecdote, instead of saying, “We offer customized training that gets results.”

The Manager

How about a hotel manager? Traditionally, he might say: “My name is Todd Jameson and I work for Great-Modern Hotels Downtown location. We offer standard hotel rooms, meeting rooms, and have a great restaurant. Details are on our website.”

Yawn! How about this:

“My name is Todd Jameson, and I am the hotel manager for the city’s top rated hotel, the Great-Modern, located downtown. Jim Bowen, who is on the other side of this room right now, provided me with an evaluation that says how thrilled he was to host his last conference there because delegates were impressed not just with our tech support team who made sure everyone had Wi-Fi access, and the food which was spectacular, but because we offer a personalized shopping service where our concierge team will shop for anything you need during the day, including souvenirs for people to take home and groceries for their fridge and pantry at the hotel.”

In the more memorable example, Todd is not just highlighting what makes his hotel stand out (the concierge service), but includes the important supports available for conferences and meetings (the technical support), plus he has a client right there in the room who can support the testimonial. That's pretty powerful.

The Massage Therapist

A massage therapist was heard saying this: "My name is Vicki and I have my own company as a registered massage therapist. I help people feel better, so come and see me!"

The massage therapist that people wanted to meet after introductions were over said this:

"My name is Joanne, and I see people with aches, pains, and limitations who are motivated to feel better and are able to get MORE out of life. Wouldn't you just love to approach the stairs with a spring in your step, be able to chase your kids or grandkids around the yard, or get up saying, 'Wow, I feel like a million dollars!?' I help people do that."

MEMORABILITY FACTOR

Let's get started on your meaningful and memorable introduction. In addition to the words you prepare, you also need to make sure that your body language and demeanor support your message.

Worksheet – Example One

Your Name

Your Business Name

If Relevant, Where You Operate



Make it Meaningful and Memorable for Potential Customers

Worksheet – Example Two

Your Name

Your Business Name

If Relevant, Where You Operate

Make it Meaningful and Memorable for Conference Participants from the Same or Related Industries

Starting the Conversation

How To Get Started

You Can Do It!

If you are shy, or an unknown among members of a network you are about to meet, it's natural to be nervous at the idea of speaking about yourself or getting outside of your comfort zone to meet new people. If you need to network as part of your job or simply want to expand your social circle, learning and planning for conversations will help. These techniques will also be very helpful for people who love networking and want some help to meet more people than the usual few they often speak with.

Conversation is something that – just like anything else we value – takes work and practice in order to master. Some people have an affinity for entering conversations, but they have also learned those skills somewhere along the way. If you look at research done about levels of conversation, they focus on levels that incorporated general discussion, discussions about subject matter, and then discussion about learning and language.

Rather than look at conversation from a theoretical framework, however, we're going to organize it into a model that helps us in networking and business relationships. This includes:

- Listening: Paying attention while others are speaking
- Small Talk: Establishing rapport and creating relationships
- Following Up: Ignore this at your peril!

Listening

The first consideration when having or contemplating a conversation is to make a commitment to listen to others as they speak. People typically like to talk about themselves. One of the goals in networking is to get them talking about themselves so you get an idea of their needs, wants, and desires and you can determine whether you want to get to know them further.

When people speak about themselves, they provide all kinds of cues through what they say and their body language that help you get to know them. When you are listening, make sure that you are focused on what the other person is saying. Avoid any temptation to look away from them, check messages on your phone, or look at your watch. Those are all cues that you aren't that interested, and will discourage any further conversation.

The Basics of Small Talk

Some people hate small talk and see it as a waste of time. This is unfortunate, since small talk contributes to developing rapport, establishes a friendly atmosphere, and leads to the exchange of information.

Small talk helps lead you to areas of **common ground** and **further exploration**, especially when you are committed to listening. If you are just getting to know someone and not even sure where to go, your careful use of a question helps to further the conversation, like this: "I know just what you mean about pizza, because there are so many places to try it out here in the city. What made you decide to try it at?"

Seven Steps to Mastering Small Talk

1. Before the networking event, list several interests and/or experiences you are willing to talk about. To recall them, you can ask yourself some questions, like:
 - o What have I read or watched lately that was enjoyable or captures my imagination?
 - o What restaurants would I recommend to someone who shares my interest in food?
 - o Where have I visited that was beyond my expectations?
 - o What hobbies could I share?
 - o Do I have weekend or holiday plans coming up?
 - o What business insights or ideas can I share that someone might find interesting?
2. Avoid topics that can quickly become too personal or controversial, including personal health, finance, or family problems; divorce or death; the slip of morals or society; gloomy economic stories; sex; politics; and religion.
3. Make eye contact and smile at people. This lets them know you are receptive and willing to talk. Avoid the temptation to turn away (although staring is not appropriate either) or cross your arms, which might end a conversation opportunity before it starts. Be warm and welcoming.
4. Step into the conversation and ask an easy, open-ended question. Examples could include:
 - o I haven't seen you at this event before. Welcome! What can I do to help you get to know some people?
 - o I can't seem to figure this out. Could you explain how this ____ works?
 - o What do you think of _____?
 - o This is my first time at this event and I'd like to meet everyone. I'm _____.
5. Listen for the other person's name and use it during the conversation.
6. Restate mutual interests (common ground) that come up in conversation. If the conversation is dying off, have more topics at the ready and keep introducing them until you find something in common. Here are some ideas:
 - o It's always great to meet someone who is interested in _____.
 - o I'm always glad to meet someone from _____ (the same town as you, common university or school, an association, etc.).

- o It's so unusual to meet someone who enjoys _____ as much as I do.
7. Practice! It really does make it easier to start, join, or maintain a conversation, and there is no way around doing the work that is needed to be successful.

CONVERSATION STIMULATION

Handy Strategies

Once you've established a connection, it can be easy for the conversation to drop off, especially if you and the person you just met aren't really clear on what your purpose is or what you have to offer. This is not the situation you want to find yourself in at a networking opportunity!

After you make your introduction, work in a question to stimulate conversation. If you are not yet good at this, do some practicing and create a handy list of questions you can memorize and then deliver without sounding forced. Good questions could include:

- o "What brings you to this event/conference/meeting today?"
- o "What are you looking forward to the most from this event today?"
- o "How would you like to change/grow...?"
- o "Have you met _____ yet? Since he is on your list and I have known him a long time, I can introduce you if you like." (There are all kinds of options here to encourage conversation.)

Keeping the Purpose in Mind

After delivering your introduction, keep in mind that you just met the person, so don't launch into a full-blown sales pitch. As well, don't ask people that you just met to do business with you or to provide you with referrals! Doing so is far too aggressive for a networking meeting. You need to develop relationships with people before you ask them for business. Everyone knows that the central reason for being there is to network for the ultimate goal of doing business anyway.

Business networking is not simply directed at finding customers in a one-to-one short interaction. It would take forever to grow your business and contacts that way! Networking is about building strong relationships with people who can ultimately help you to do business with them and people that they know. It's all about converting conversations and prospects to buying customers.

The Complicated Parts

The process of networking cannot be about constantly asking people for business, or they will be put off. Not only will they ignore you; they'll avoid you. Make it a priority to help and support others (be a giver not a taker), and notice that as you are helpful and supportive of others they tend to be the same of you.

People are complicated, and a network can be a highly complex operation. Sometimes you cannot see who or why someone is working with or for you, so you have to be patient about hidden processes and know that your

own efforts can take a while before you see a return.

Whether you refer to this as karma, the law of reciprocity, or something else, networks that flourish tend to have a lot of people who interact, refer, and are helpful to one another. Those are the networks you want to be part of, and they are also the ones where you will have opportunity to help and contribute. If there are members of the network who are really in competition with you, see them as potential allies instead of people to avoid and scrutinize, and consider the opportunities available if you have a collegial or supportive relationship.

GROWING SKILLS

Whether you are at a large networking event or a smaller gathering, your goal includes getting to meet people, to make meaningful connections, and even to subtly pre-qualify some of them. Although you will probably want to avoid looking like a butterfly flitting around the room and speaking with everyone, you also need to make the most of your time and engage in at least a couple of deeper conversations.

If you approach a small group of people speaking together, and this is a networking event, you can expect that they will welcome you and encourage you to introduce yourself. However, they don't always know how to facilitate networking either! You can join in or start a conversation by applying the following steps:

- o Approach a group, smile, but don't actually interrupt the conversation going on.
- o Listen to get the gist of the conversation.
- o If there is no conversation and people are standing awkwardly, start something!
- o When the time is right, contribute. Share an anecdote or engaging, related story.
- o Once you have met everyone and have had a chance to contribute, simply excuse yourself and move on to another group or individual who appears receptive (as long as it is not impolite).

Approaching a small group in your lunch room can be done in a similar, although less formal kind of way.

If you are not accustomed to meeting new people, do not feel particularly comfortable with networking, or are terrified of the thought of implementing any of these things, it's okay – lots of people feel that way! Try to use some stress reduction techniques to work through any anxiety before, during, and after the event. Also, arrange to get plenty of practice by going to lots of networking opportunities, joining a local Toastmasters group, and practicing your approach with people you are comfortable being around.

What are your favorite techniques for working through nervousness associated with networking?

Plan Your Own Future

Although it might seem counterintuitive, people who don't particularly like to network can create great success by planning their own events. When you organize the event, you have the ability to select where it will be held, what's included in terms of an agenda or schedule, who gets invited, and the structure of the event.

With our access to electronic media, it's easier than ever to invite people to a networking event. People who have connected on gather together in independently arranged "Tweet-Ups" that can be set up for almost any purpose, including chatting over coffee, sharing learning in a workshop, and networking. Websites such as Eventbrite.com and MeetUp.com easily facilitate meetings of all types with little to no cost for an organizer.

BNI® (Business Network International) founder Dr. Ivan Misner says that he never set out to be a networker, nor does he spend every waking moment at events where he is networking and meeting people. He describes himself as a bit of a homebody but that he has a passion for helping people build their businesses. Since 1985, he has created the world's largest business networking and referral business. In a similar vein, eWomenNetwork founder Sandra Yancey started a networking group because she really detested networking and knew she needed to get good at it. Eleven years later, she is leading the world's largest women's business network in the world and organizes an annual conference with 2000 attendees.

Making Connections

Outline a plan for a networking opportunity and what it will look like.

An objective (reason) to get this group of people together

A list of potential participants

A theme or uniting element that will encourage people to attend

Potential date and time

Whether you would charge for the event or not

The Handshake

The Importance of a Handshake

During the important first few minutes of a new relationship, a handshake is usually the only body contact between two people. It can communicate warmth, a genuine concern for the other person, and an image of either strength or gentleness. It can also communicate indifference and weakness. Developing a professional handshake is perhaps one of the most valuable business skills you can ever cultivate.

Five Factors

The message you communicate with your handshake is determined by five factors.

Degree of Firmness

Your grip should be firm, rather than weak. However, you don't want your handshake to be painful to the other person. Consideration is appreciated. Be especially considerate if you are shaking hands with someone in a receiving line who has many more hands to shake, someone who is wearing a lot of rings, or someone who is obviously elderly and perhaps fragile.

Dryness of Hand

We all prefer to shake a hand that is dry. While you typically don't want to obviously dry your hands before

greeting someone, this is perfectly acceptable if you have been holding a cold glass. Similarly, if you are at the buffet table and have been eating, it is expected that you would wipe your hand on your napkin before extending it to be shaken.

Depth of Grip

A handshake is palm to palm. Generally you will place your hand so that the web between your thumb and forefinger meets the web of the other person's hand, briefly. Your hand remains perpendicular. If your palm is facing up, this may be construed as a sign of submissiveness. Similarly, if your palm is on top, it can be seen as a sign of aggressiveness.

Duration of Grip

The perfect handshake is about three seconds. You can gently pump once or twice but this is not necessary. Then pull back your hand, even if you are still talking.

Eye Contact

While this will vary from culture to culture, in North America we expect the person shaking our hand to make eye contact with us.

Tips for Success

Have something to say as you shake hands, if possible. It doesn't require anything witty. It may even be the old stand-by, "Pleased to meet you." However, these few words set the stage for some small talk that can be the beginning of a new business relationship.

Grasping the top of the other person's hand with your other hand, so that their hand is enveloped in yours, may very well signal warmth and affection. However, this may be seen as patronizing and too familiar for an introductory handshake. Save this handshake for a meeting with an old friend.

Business Cards

Business Card Etiquette

Tips and Tricks

Don't leave home without your cards, especially when you are headed to a networking event. However, **don't hand out your business card to everyone you know**. First, see if people need or want your card. Handing out your cards like chewing gum makes you seem like a pushy salesperson – not the image you want to project.

Make sure your business cards are clean and in **good condition**. They are a part of your business image. A business card that is dirty or curled at the edges leaves a poor first impression. Use a business card case to keep

your cards clean and fresh.

When your cards are **damaged or out of date**, print new ones. If you start crossing out information on a card and write new information on top of it, it makes it difficult to read and looks messy. Remember that these cards are part of your image. Make sure yours are well designed and up to date.

When you receive a card, take a moment to look at it. Make a positive comment about some aspect of the card: the logo, the company name, or business location. This shows respect for the other person, and demonstrates your interest in them. As well, this is an excellent way for you to find out more about them, such as their job title. It also helps you remember their name, or reminds you of their name in case you forgot – a very common occurrence.

If someone hands you a card that you don't want, **don't refuse** to take it. Accept it, look at it, and put it in a pocket. You can throw it out later when they aren't around to see you do so.

After you've looked at the card, place it carefully in a card case, or in a front pocket – not a back pocket. Treat the card with **respect**. This includes being careful about writing on people's cards. Although this may seem contrary to current thoughts on networking, in many cultures (specifically Asia), a business card is part of the overall persona, and should be treated with respect. People spend time and money designing a professional card and may not appreciate you writing across it. If you need to record information, write on the back (if there is room), not across the front. Ask first, "Do you mind if I write on your card?"

Electronic Card Sharing

Physical cards remain the standard in business networking situations, although a lot of people prefer to gather and store information in their smartphones than collect cards. Be flexible when you are at a networking event. If you have a smartphone, download a few of the popular apps so that you can quickly and efficiently share your information. You will have to go through the new contacts and organize them after the event and load them into your database, or whatever system you are using. Make sure you add a reminder in your task list so that you don't forget! Losing valuable contacts is a big waste after you've invested time in meeting people that you want to follow up with.

Some apps are more attractive to look at for a receiver than others. Before you use an app or go to the extent of creating a personalized QR code, make sure you see what the result looks like to the person who receives your information.

A QR (short for Quick Response) code is an electronic representation of a piece of information. Using a QR code on your business card or brochure, or in other places, allows someone with a smartphone and a QR code reader (an easily downloadable app) to go directly to an electronic styled business card or a landing page on your website.

Here is a sample QR code:



In a Pinch

It's not unusual for someone to start a new job and find that one of their first tasks is to meet people in the company or industry, or start networking and amassing sales. If this is you, and you don't have business cards yet, don't worry – there's a solution.

As well, sometimes people may work in a job that does not provide them with a business card, or they are looking for a new job. Don't worry – there's a solution for these people too!

Stationery stores generally carry a range of ready-to-print products so that you can print your own cards, complete with your contact information. You don't have to get fancy with them, and they don't even have to be branded, but they do need your base essentials listed: name, phone number, and e-mail address. If you have a personal brand that you are known for (or would like to be known for) you can incorporate that too. A local printing company or online resource can also provide you with a decent card quite inexpensively.

Whatever you decide, do not attend a networking event without a business card. Even if you are doing casual networking at a coffee shop, you don't want to be caught without something.

In the space below, design your calling card.



Handling Tough Situations

The Things We Say

Assessing Ourselves

Networking isn't easy! If it was, everyone would be doing it and seeing great success. It is, however, the way to meet people and start relationships that you want to further. In very tight, well-established networking groups we can witness some uncomfortable and downright awkward situations.

If you encounter a network that seems to be closed to you and where people form cliques that appear

unapproachable, you'll have to plan for how you want to handle that. If you say something you later regret, you may have to do some damage control.

Finally, you have to monitor your own behavior. Do some self-evaluation and ask:

- o Do I think before I speak?
- o Do I blurt things out and regret it later?
- o Am I aggressive in my introductions and interactions?
- o Do I speak inclusively and diplomatically?
- o Do I get angry, sad, or frustrated when I speak?

Making Connections

Situations when I spoke hurtful, uncaring, or emotionally loaded words for the sake of being honest or transparent	How I could have made that moment better by paying more attention to what I was saying

Six Strategies for Success

When you are having a problem, there are six strategies we recommend you choose from.

- o Stop talking (bite your tongue if needed) and stop the words from tumbling out.
- o Simply walk away. You could say, "I'm not handling this very well. Please excuse me."
- o Use a paraphrasing technique to repeat what's being said to you back to the speaker. This gives you a chance to hear what they are really saying and to consider your response.
- o Pause. Take a deep breath and think about what you'd like to say, instead of just jumping in.
- o Afterwards, take a few minutes to write out your potential response. This will give you a chance to work through what you will say the next time.
- o Apologize, and be sincere about it.

What Others Say

If you have done your pre-work, the networking group you are meeting with should be the right place to be. However, sometimes personalities, the weather, or the stars are out of sync and you will find yourself in what seems like the wrong place. Maybe the dynamics of the group are off, the group is too small for good networking to take place, or there is something else going on.

Resist the temptation to leave the room. Don't ask for your membership to be refunded. Instead, get strategic:

- Suspend judgment. There may be some dynamic present, but you don't have to understand it right away.
- Practice patience and curiosity. Who is the leader of this group? What is the purpose behind the meeting? Who can you introduce yourself to?
- How can you make the meeting better, just by being you and being willing to meet people? How can you help?

As you receive answers and information, listen with your ears, your eyes, and your heart. By being strategic and working with what you have, you are more likely to benefit from being at this particular meeting. Granted, you may not return to the group again, but at least you have fully fleshed out the opportunity.

You might make just one good connection in that room, or perhaps you meet no one. Just remember that something drew you to that group. What was it? If your intentions fell in line with the purpose, why are things not working out? If you can't change it, do you continue to pay attention to the issues, or not?

Introverts and Extroverts

While everyone who networks may have their own reasons for doing so, one common aspect is that they network to meet people, and ultimately, do something with those connections, whether it is to sell more products and services, find a new job, or raise money for a charity.

At any networking event you'll find yourself in a room of people who lie somewhere on a continuum of introversion to extroversion. While we think of **extroverts** as people who are outgoing and have the easiest time making new connections, that doesn't mean they are naturally good at networking. It might be something they need to learn.

On the other hand, **introverts** are people who can be extremely to moderately shy, but they can learn to network extremely well and even be mistaken for extroverts as they connect and build relationships.

Where is your comfort level? How about that of the people you are meeting? While labels can be limiting, using them can also be helpful in figuring out how we want to meet people, and how others perceive us. Whatever you do, don't use a label as something that limits you or becomes an excuse, like this: "That Joe has all the luck – he is a real extrovert."

Self-acceptance is an important attribute for living up to your own potential. Extroverts can struggle with networking because they assume their outgoing nature is all they need to build important relationships, and introverts can be master networkers. It depends on skill, attitude, and openness to learn.

You have the same chances as anyone else to develop strengths and skill, and to grow. Be willing and open to stretch yourself and develop the skills that you want. No matter what your own style is, what labels you use, or your comfort at forging new relationships, you need to know and accept that you can improve your competency at relating to people, no matter what their style is.

Making Connections

List five tips for making great networking contacts for introverts and extroverts.

Introverts	Extroverts

Following Up

You've networked, conversed, gathered information, and now you have a fresh new stack of business cards or electronic entries in your smartphone. Now it's time to do something with that information and to make the most of it.

Following Up

Networking leads very naturally to follow up, despite the fact that people can actually be pretty poor at following up with people they meet! The reasons for this are mysterious and perplexing, since many successful networkers and sales people confirm that their freedom (or fortune, depending on who you speak with), comes from being diligent about doing their follow up.

While you are at a networking event, you can end the conversation with an invitation to connect (if you want to). Say something about what you enjoyed, and then extend an invitation that compels them to connect with

you. Here are some examples.

- o “Jim, it was fun to hear about your collection of bird watching books. I rarely meet someone with that much passion unless I am at a monthly bird enthusiasts club meeting. If you would like to meet some more bird buffs, I can let you know the next time they are getting together if you would like. How can I get in touch with you?”
- o “I wonder if we could share a 15 minute phone call and talk more about this. I think I may be able to connect you with _____ but I will need a few more details. Do you have a card?”
- o “I’ll call you at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday. It’s been great talking with you today.” Then make sure you remember to make the call!
- o “I have a monthly newsletter (or meeting) about (their need or pain point). Would you mind if I add you to my invitation/subscription list? Even if you get one gem from it, the difference in your results will be noticeable immediately.”

If they don’t accept your invitation, that’s okay, because you’ve still made that connection and may see them again. What is essential about great results from networking is taking the next steps and developing that relationship. This is where your skill with following up becomes essential, although very few people actually consistently do it!

Case Study

In a great example of how well this can work for you, here is a true story from one of our team members.

I was at a networking event that consisted of a room full of business women. We were going through a very focused process and were asked to list the things we needed to buy in the next 30 days. I mentioned that I needed a new car battery and someone to take over the maintenance of my car because I had recently moved and my trusted mechanic was in another region. After the session, one of the women in the group handed me her business card with the name and number of her mechanic written on the back. Another woman in the group also endorsed this particular mechanic, which I thought was pretty helpful of both of them. However, the power of this connection grew the next day when I got a message from the mechanic, after he received a referral from the woman who gave me her card. Talk about powerful! I booked an appointment with him right away, and his attention to detail and service is fantastic.

Making it Personal

We’ve mentioned previously that networking is about developing relationships, and doing so means that your follow up needs to be personal too.

Phone Calls

One of the most effective forms of follow up is to call someone and either pick up on a comment that came out during the networking session, or offer to help someone with something (in a genuine offer to help, of course). This means that you pick up the phone and speak with them or leave a message.

E-mail and Text Messages

In this age, e-mail and text messages are highly utilized, and for many people they are clearly preferred over a phone call. You can ask the person you've met what method they prefer, and then go ahead and use their preferred channel.

In your first text message it's always a good idea to start with, "It's Pat, we met Thursday's networking meeting..." and in an e-mail, you should always have a signature panel that contains your contact information. Remember that you are building relationships and that people you have just met are not looking for, nor will they appreciate hard selling pitches and information. If you choose to do so, you run a very real risk of having your e-mail or phone number blocked or reported for spam.

E-mail can be very handy for informal follow-up, where you make meaningful connections and contributions to people's lives, and they get to know you without feeling like you want to sell them anything. Here are some sample formats that you can use.

Sample One

Hi John,

When we last spoke, you mentioned a new book by ____ that was coming out soon. I added it to my reading list and received it this weekend and had a really hard time putting it down! I really got a lot out of the chapter about _____. Thank so much for the recommendation.

Sample Two

Hi Marlene,

When we met a couple of weeks ago, you mentioned that you'd love to get some new artwork in your office. This morning on the Early Show they mentioned that the regional art gallery is starting up a rental program where local businesses and benefactors can rent great art for a reasonable price. Subscribers to the program get all kinds of services, including having things professionally hung at no charge. I thought I would pass the message along to you just in case you haven't heard yet.

Meetings

If you have taken the bull by the horns and will organize your own networking event, send invitations and invite people that you think could be of benefit to one another. This is not the same as inviting people who could be a direct benefit to you. If the integrity of networking survives on helping others, then your meetings need to have the same kind of professionalism attached to them as well.

Choosing to Abstain

You may not like follow up. You may not need more connections in your database. You may not need more sales. If any of those are true for you, the option certainly exists for you not to do any follow up. However, very few people attend networking sessions who don't want anything out of it at all. If you made the decision and had to work up any courage to go to a networking event then it's equally important that you make the most of those efforts and do your follow up.

Opting In

We'd like to share a word about newsletter and e-mails lists for those of you who author them. In many parts of

the business world, you are not permitted to add someone to a group list without first getting their permission. If you add people to a list without their permission or having them complete an opt-in form from your website, they can (and will) click the unsubscribe button at the bottom of your missive, and they

can report you to the authorities for spam, which means your account can be disabled. Make sure you only add people who opt-in willingly.

Organizing Your Network

Contact Management Systems

The Importance of a System

As your network (and hopefully your results) grows, keeping up on all the people you have met, who to call, when to call them, and what to say is a real challenge. As a relationship developer you want to make sure that you are having meaningful, beneficial contact with people. As a result, you need to use a contact system. And yes, we said system. A system can be as complicated or simple as you need it to be. Systems are very important in organizing, managing, and succeeding in business – any kind of business.

Choosing a System

A simple contact system could be founded on something as straightforward as a spreadsheet where you track the people you meet, like this:

Name	Title	Organization	Phone	Address	Last Contact

There are many kinds of contact management systems available, and you have to decide what is best for you. There are lots of different kinds of organization systems available. What's important is that you develop a system that works for you. To get started, you could ask colleagues what system they are using and what features they really like. Some systems will allow you to test it out for 30 days at no charge, although you won't want to be trying too many or you will be spending a lot of time on your computer instead of nurturing leads.

Most systems (such as ACT! and Microsoft Outlook) allow you to add contacts using a form. This type of system allows you to capture a lot more details, including notes on where you met, common interests, and so on.

About Integrated Systems

As your network grows, it is important to have it integrated with a calendar system so that you receive reminders about tasks and follow-ups that must be completed. These reminders are your cue for who to call and when, the purpose of your call, and much more. Again, these systems can be very simple and sufficient for a small network or business, and typically get more sophisticated for bigger operations. While they used to be strictly available for PC use, many of them now have a cloud-based element to them, making them accessible from any Internet-capable device, all the time.

Mastering Networking

Organization Skills are Important!

Getting good at networking is one of your goals. Being a master at it means that you adopt systems and make them work for you so that you can create opportunities. This way you never have to dig for phone numbers, addresses, miss an appointment, or arrive late. You won't be caught unprepared on a deadline, or when someone calls you out of the blue. If you tend to be someone who is not well organized, cannot find your business cards, arrives late frequently, or forgets to call people back, then you need to do some homework. Keep track of things, put them where they belong, and know where to find them. Set up systems that serve you, and design them to serve you well.

Skills to Develop

As you create opportunities and connections for others, you will create those same things for yourself. Rather than deciding whether something can or cannot be accomplished, look at the possibilities, and become someone who solves problems as opposed to giving up because of them.

Master networkers will ask people they meet to look at things in a different way and also consider some possibilities. They ask questions like:

- Have you thought about...
- Have you considered...
- I wonder if...
- What if we looked at it from a different perspective...

Master networkers are good at brainstorming, identifying solutions, and willing to share what they know (whether it is a service or referral to a person), and with the approach of serving and helping others before themselves. This is part of their commitment to **give and grow**.

Many networkers keep detailed notes in a journal or digital file to remind them of those relationships being fostered, ideas exchanged, and things to do. A paper journal might be filled with visual cues that help with memory or help someone to find what they are looking for. In contrast, a digital journal might take a little

getting used to and lacks some features of a paper file, but may be a little more accessible if stored on a

mobile device. As well, it becomes even harder to lose if it is backed up in the cloud. Your journal can become a living history of people you meet, topics discussed, and plans. You don't have to record long entries, but just put enough there to cue you to a particular conversation.

Here is an example:

Tuesday Networking Group, March 26

- o James, new sports car
- o Brian, new job starts April 21
- o Megan, became an aunt March 20

This makes it easy for you to have a peek in your journal, review the last few entries, and refresh your memory on who was doing what. You can also flip back for months at a time. With a digital version, you can use keywords and tags to highlight things and locate them easily.

Setting Goals

People who master the art and science of networking know where they are going and what the purpose of networking is to them. If they attend a certain networking group because their boss tells them to, they know how to make the most of it. If they attend with the intent of getting or making referrals, the clarity they have helps them to make the most of opportunities as they arise, and to create opportunities if they don't surface on their own. Before any networking meeting, you should be very clear on who you want to meet, how many people you want to make contact with, what your objectives are, and what questions you will ask.

Consistency

Strong networkers understand the need to be consistent. They don't network at the time they need more contacts or to further their careers. They do it because they like to be able to contribute and serve. They understand that networking helps them and that it helps everyone around them, too. Networking is part of their lifestyle.

Independent Growth

Think about your skills as a networker. Reflect on what you need to add to your skills in order to be valued as a networker, and to benefit.

Leveraging the Internet

Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-focused social media site. Its aims include helping people in business connect, helping businesses do business with each other, providing services to business people, and networking within your industry (as well as related or complementary industries).

Within the LinkedIn network (found at www.linkedin.com), you can establish a profile, create a company profile, and engage in communities that already exist, while considering the benefits or establishing your own community there.

LinkedIn has several ways that you can locate other people. You can search for them from the home page of the site before you even join and see if there are like-minded people there that you want to connect with. LinkedIn is a consistent, content rich, place to find people and information. It is a site that has focused on what it is good at, so you won't find games or chat. They do, however, offer an enormous network of groups where you can find blog posts and articles, connect in conversations, and expand your own network.

LinkedIn does have the ability for you to enter a status update that will show in your news feed on your profile page and the news feeds of people you are connected to. In order to save you a bit of time, you can update your status on LinkedIn and have it feed to your Twitter update. Since both statuses are restricted to a concise 140 character limit, things that you say in LinkedIn do not get cut off in Twitter.

However, Twitter announced in June 2012 that users will not be able to automatically post their updates to LinkedIn. You can still send your LinkedIn updates to Twitter, but not vice-versa. Be judicious in your LinkedIn updates and people will be more likely to be curious about what you do so and follow you along.

Getting Connected

Connecting to Others

LinkedIn is all about connections, and as with any social media platform, those connections help you to build and/or connect as a community. When you log into your LinkedIn profile, you can then add connections from the Contact tab. You can look for connections by selecting schools you attended (to connect with classmates), companies you've worked with (to connect with colleagues), and so on. There are also plenty of helpful how-to links on LinkedIn to get this working for you.

When you are logged in and you want to search for a connection, you simply enter the person's name in the LinkedIn search bar. You can also search for them quickly if you know their e-mail address. If you want to connect to someone you do not actually know, LinkedIn encourages you to connect to people that you know and people who are connected to someone you know (a second-degree connection) and that they know (a third-degree connection).

You can connect to second- and third-degree connections by sending them a request directly (and you should mention who you know in common if you do so), or, you can request that your friend (the first-degree connection you have) introduce the new person to you. This sounds more complicated than it is, but helps to stop people who don't know each other at all from connecting and simply building huge lists of connections that they really have nothing in common with, and don't wish to have in their network.

LinkedIn also provides HTML code for you to add a LinkedIn button to your website or blog so that people can find you on LinkedIn easily. This is especially handy if you have a pretty common name!

Using Groups

LinkedIn groups are also a great way to get connected. There are plenty of them to try out. We suggest that you visit, read, connect to, and start communicating with some of the groups that are already there. You can adjust your settings with the groups so that each day or once a week you get a digest of conversations that are underway, resources that have been made available, etc. Some groups will have to give you permission to join.

If you are connected to groups that are right for you, join in the conversations and see what is happening. If you don't enjoy being a part of a particular group, you can always leave and disconnect yourself.

When you have been part of these groups for a while and are getting involved in some conversations, it may be time to consider whether it makes sense for you, your company, or an association you are connected to, to start a group. You'll want to have plenty of conversation starters as part of your plan. You also need to devote time for visiting the group regularly – (once a day at least) to engage in the conversations there, answer questions, provide links to resources, or to connect people together. If this sounds like a lot of work, it can be.

Get as involved as you would like and have time for, and see what kind of information and value you get from particular groups in your industry or other areas of interest. If you do set up a group, you need to be

dedicated to it to ensure that it thrives.

Using Twitter

Twitter is another large and very popular social networking platform. It has amassed millions of users around the world who are sometimes referred to as Twits.

Twitter allows you to build a profile centered around you personally or your business. As with other social media networks, it encourages people to organize in communities as you connect with people you know, do business with, or who find you randomly.

When you use Twitter, you will get used to speaking in very concise terms, because each update that you post on the site is restricted to just 140 characters. (That's not 140 words, but characters, as in the individual letters and spaces that you include in your message. You can link your message to a photo that represents a thought or particular moment, a blog post, an article, or provide a link to your website. As you develop fluency with Twitter, you will find it easier to create short, snappy comments that compel people to read your messages and make them want to know more about you and your company.

When you start to use Twitter, you will find that you can get bogged down in the number of other people's messages. Make sure that what you are doing on Twitter fits with your plan. One of the weaknesses of Twitter is that people post whatever they are thinking about or doing at that moment, so there are pages and pages of banality to filter through as you look for people to connect with. Then there are people who post links to nonsense you won't be interested in, spam, and hours that you can sit and simply read streams of information.

However, Twitter has some excellent features, which we'll talk about below.

Hashtags

Do you remember not that long ago when we called the # symbol a number sign? Twitter has re-branded that symbol and it is now commonly called a hashtag.

When you add a hashtag to your message, you can track, organize, and communicate with other people who use the same hashtag. In order to communicate with their communities directly, a business owner can start a "meeting" and everyone there answers or asks questions that end with the same hashtag. People following along with the hashtag can see the conversation going on within its own stream, and outside of everyone else's conversations.

Say that you represent a business that sells smartphones and you'd like to get people talking about it and answer their questions before the next release is due out. You could set up a status update that says: "Join in on new I'm Smart phone apps Tuesday at 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter." That message tells people what you are talking about, when to be on Twitter, and which hashtag to use.

If you send the message out and change the wording slightly to catch people's attention, you can host a virtual conversation that helps you connect to your community. You might try something like this: "New I'm Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter."

Re-Tweets

By keeping your status updates short (the example above about #smarter is 98 characters), you leave space for people to forward your messages along to their followers by re-tweeting. The space that you left allows them to add a brief comment like "Great idea," "A must see," and so on. A re-tweeted status update also starts with the abbreviation RT. If your status is long, people can use MT in front, which stands for "modified tweet," where they will edit your message so that it fits alongside their own.

If someone re-tweets the #smarter message, they might say something like this: "RT @helper New I'm Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter. <--Great idea! I'll be there!"

Initially, your staff and friends can re-tweet messages if you ask them. You'll soon see that if you are offering something of value to people, and your message catches their attention, that your messages will spread.

By looking under the "Interactions" tab and selecting "mentions," you will be able to see who re-tweets your messages. By searching for your hashtag, you can also see who is using that moniker to connect.

As well, Twitter courtesy is to thank people who spread your messages by sending them a message via a status update, like this: "Thanks for the RT @helpful, @helper, @moniker."

Your Name

Your name on Twitter needs to be a reflection of your brand, so choose wisely. Most people use their name, or their initials if their name is long. You need to use something so that people can find you. If your name is Martin MacDonald Smyth and people don't really know if you are a Mac or Mc, or a Smyth or Smith, they won't be able to find you and they may not look too hard. Make sure that you include a link to your Twitter name in all the obvious spots, like on your website, your blog, your Facebook page, and so on.

If you are using your business name as your Twitter name, remember to select something that represents your brand. Keep your name short but meaningful. In status updates such as a re-tweet, or when someone wants to mention you in a status update, your name and the @ symbol get counted as characters!

Create good, strong, Twitter names for your business or personal use.

Create good, strong, Twitter names for your business or personal use.

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across the entire page. The lines are uniform in thickness and color, providing a guide for letter height and placement. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Using Lists on Twitter

With the running list of updates on your screen, it can be very difficult to find information that is addressed to you or that you should be keeping an eye on. Fortunately, you can organize people that you follow into lists. That way, you can check for direct messages, mentions, and hashtags to see if there are messages directed to you or your organization. You can also check into the lists you are most interested in to see what people are saying that might catch your eye.

As an example, my personal Twitter account (which represents my business) has about 1300 followers right now. Some of those people tweet frequently, so it is not possible for me to keep up with what everyone is saying. To organize things, when I follow someone new, I put them into a list if I want to keep an eye on what they are saying. All of my lists are private so that other members of Twitter cannot see how I organize them, but you can make your lists public if you think other people might be interested in them or sharing the lists benefits you in some way.

You can create lists very easily and give them any name you want. Currently, I have lists for:

- Folks to watch
- Local businesses
- Media
- National businesses
- Training and education

The big advantage of lists is that you can check into Twitter quickly and see what's most important to you. When you have some extra time, by all means click on the Home tab and see everything in your stream. Lists are handy, however, to keep an eye on people you are most interested in.

Using Facebook

Can Facebook help you grow? Can it connect you with your network so that you can deepen relationships and meet your networking goals? The answer is multi-faceted and will depend on where your contacts are as well as what you have to offer.

Facebook is an internationally successful social media platform that, in 2011, had amassed over half a billion users. This is an enormous market for any business; if your prospects or customers are on Facebook, you need to establish a presence there too.

Businesses are not allowed to sell directly on Facebook. Instead, they can offer information, make connections, develop relationships, and share news by creating interesting posts, notes, and so on. We refer to this process as **building a community**. Some contests are allowed, but you need to check their terms of reference (which change regularly) to make sure your approach works with their site. Otherwise, your page could be shut down by Facebook administration.

First Steps

Before you set up any kind of business page on any social media site, review your networking goals. This will help you to make sure the page fits with your plan, supports your business, and is not going to take you in a different direction.

Next Steps

Visit www.facebook.com. If you don't have a personal account, you cannot set up your business page. You might not want your personal information shared with all of your employees or customers, naturally, and you have the option to adjust your privacy settings so that people can see only what you want them to. This means you can set up your personal page along with your photo (perhaps a way to contact you), and that's all anyone else has to see. It's really up to you.

An important note about Facebook is that from time to time they change their privacy and visibility settings. This means it is essential that you keep an eye on their terms of service and that you check your account and privacy settings. As an example, in June 2012, Facebook changed every person's e-mail contact information to a Facebook e-mail address. This outraged some subscribers and people were rapidly making adjustments so that their information reflected their personal e-mail addresses. You simply have to be ready (or assign someone on your staff to be ready), alert, and flexible.

Due Diligence

Before you get too far, visit Facebook's terms page at www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf and make sure that you agree with the rules and are able to follow them. You may also want to check out the rules for promotions, which are at this link: https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines. (Note that these links were accurate at the time of writing. Velsoft takes no responsibility for the accuracy of these sites or the content within.)

Now You Can!

From your personal Facebook page, you can set up a business page that visitors can visit. If they want to see your updates in their own news feed, they can click "like" on your business page.

Your updates need to be interesting and capture attention. If they don't, even people who have "liked" your page may hide your posts and not see them. This means that you are not trying to gather numbers. Instead, you must focus on developing relationships and interacting with your community.

Know Your Tools

There are plenty of options to help you maximize the benefit of networking through social media. Programs like HootSuite can help you read, organize, and post updates on all your social profiles, and to know when someone messages you directly. TweetDeck can help you to organize, sort, and update your Twitter profiles.

Pinterest is another social media site that works well for businesses with a strong visual component.

Research, investigate, and measure the different social networks available to see where your target market is, and whether your customers are there.

Personal Action Plan

I am already doing these things well:

I want to improve these areas:

I have these resources to help me:

As a result of what I have learned in this workshop, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

Further Reading:

- ✓ Burg, Bob. *Endless Referrals: Network Your Everyday Contacts Into Sales (3rd Edition)*. McGraw-Hill, 2005.
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- ✓ —. *Who's Got Your Back: The Breakthrough Program to Build Deep, Trusting Relationships that Create Success – and Won't Let You Fail*. Crown Business, 2009.
- ✓ Konrath, Jill. *Selling to Big Companies*. Kaplan Publishing, 2005.
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