



8 Ways to Generate Sales Through Networking

When you are looking to grow your business through high-quality prospects and ongoing referrals, it's time to look at networking. Opportunities to get connected include industry-specific groups and small business associations, expos and trade shows, workshops and seminars, awards ceremonies, and fundraisers. Here are eight ways to make the most of any occasion:

- 1. Be in the right place** ... at the right time. Look for groups or events that seem to be a good fit for you and what you are selling. Determine the membership profile, dues, meeting frequency and sponsorship or speaking opportunities. Make it a priority to be there.
- 2. Seize the day.** Networking is a long-term process, designed to nurture relationships for referrals and sales. If you wait until you need referrals to start networking, it will be too late. The time to start is now.
- 3. Be a regular.** Networking success occurs through repeat attendance rather than single encounters with multiple groups. When you want people to share information and contacts with you, a key strategy is to have a dependable and reliable reputation.
- 4. Take the lead role.** Volunteer to head up a committee, edit the organizational newsletter, or make phone calls for the next membership drive or fundraising event. Visibility pays off.
- 5. Embrace social networking, too.** LinkedIn, for example, is the world's largest professional network with more than 65 million members. The site lets you build connections to trusted contacts and helps you to exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a wide network of professionals.
- 6. Become a trusted source.** Be a connection conduit: "I don't have a need for ABC widgets, but I do have an associate who may have several customers who do. Let me give you her contact information."
- 7. Remember the take-away.** Think exchanging business cards is a thing of the past? Think again. Be generous in your distribution, and always remember to ask for a card from the people who receive yours. Make notes on the back of each card to jog your memory about conversations had and ideas discussed. Sounds old-school ... but it works.
- 8. Keep the conversations alive.** You made the notes. Now be timely with your follow up. "We met on Monday night and I promised to forward some research I have on ABC. I thought about it further and think these best practices for XYZ will interest you, too."

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