

It's Networking that Gets Results!

BY DONNA MESSER

Ever wondered why some people seem to have all the luck? Why some people always seem to be at the right place at the right time? Is it Luck?
No. It's effective networking!

- ◆ Networking is knowing the right people, and using not abusing the connections.
- ◆ Networking is giving not just getting; it's helping others help themselves.
- ◆ Networking is asking for what you want, but offering to share what you have.
- ◆ Networking is really listening, while trying to find a link that will benefit both sides.
- ◆ Networking is lateral thinking, trying to find a "fit" in every situation.
- ◆ Networking is being a creative thinker, finding a way to make a profitable connection.
- ◆ Networking is like being a marriage broker, making the introduction after checking the credentials.
- ◆ Networking is learning to build strategic alliances with others whose strength is your weakness.
- ◆ Networking is joint venturing with others who can add value to you or your products.
- ◆ Networking is being willing to share.

I have been networking all my life. I just didn't know what it was called. I always knew what I was good at, and it only made sense to find others who could provide me with what I lacked.

As a student, I was always the leader, I never could understand why, until one day, I realized that when I was in charge, everyone had the opportunity to "shine." I always formed committees, using the strengths of everyone who participated. We always won, came first, and had the most fun! Why? Because we were a team! Everyone pulling in the same direction, no one any better than anyone else.

As I got older, I formed new relationships, started new friendships, and got involved in a variety of activities. A repetition of my student days, I again took the lead. As time passed I found myself keeping in touch

with many of the people I worked with, collecting their business cards, and dropping them a line just to say hello. Quite often asking them if they needed anything. I was amazed at how many times someone would say, "as a matter of fact I am looking for something..." and I would be able to "connect" them to someone who could provide them with what they needed. I enjoyed the challenge of finding solutions for people. I would stretch my imagination, and try and find someone in my list of contacts that might be able to help.

My list of contacts began to grow and was soon alphabetized and placed in binders. Comments were placed on the back of each card so that I could remember why I had kept the card. I was becoming an expert at "connecting." Almost every time I met someone, I would ask if I could help them.

Word spread, and the phone began to ring. People were calling, they wanted to connect with others who could help them find a solution or achieve a goal. I decided that I would bring these people together and see if I couldn't help everyone at the same time. Wednesday night was designated as the night to "connect." The first night there were about a dozen people. I facilitated the meeting and asked people to identify themselves and explain what they needed. I kept notes and asked everyone attending to think about who they knew that could help the others get closer to their goal. The room was electrifying; everyone was concentrating on helping the person speaking. Trying to find a connection that could help that person achieve their goal! By the time the last person had identified their needs, everyone in the room was contributing their resources. It was amazing!

Within a few weeks, the original 12 had talked to friends and associates and suddenly there were 60 people all wanting to be part of the Wednesday night program. I knew I had to structure the program so that everyone could have a chance to identify themselves and ask for what they needed. I decided to keep everyone to a one-minute introduction, and I volunteered to help them perfect it. Using a little creativity, I came up with "Smile & Ask," and an effective one-minute "informational" was born.

Smile & Ask

Start by giving a smile; make eye contact; introduce yourself; let people know what you do; explain what you need; ask how you can help them; say thank you; keep in touch.

There needed to be some guidelines so that no one would take advantage of anyone else. "Ten Rules for Good Networking" was the result.

Ten Rules for Good Networking

- ✓ be prepared
- ✓ be open minded
- ✓ don't be afraid to ask
- ✓ treat everyone as equals
- ✓ build on information, not status
- ✓ say thank you
- ✓ don't waste your resources
- ✓ give without expectation
- ✓ set realistic and achievable goals
- ✓ be committed and determined

What began as a way to help a few people achieve their goals has become my way of life. From the original 12, there are now more than 10,000 people in my network. My card management system has changed; I now use a computer, and a program that scans the business cards for me. I use the same principals today as I did when I started. I now meet more people with bigger needs and the results have been gratifying.

ConnectUs International Inc. is the official company name. I still work with individuals, but concentrate on major corporations whose employees need to learn the effective art of networking. My clients include major banks, trust companies, accounting and legal firms, government agencies and education. I still hold those workshops.

My name is Donna Messer, How Can I Help You? **SBCM**

Donna Messer is the Managing Editor of BusinessWoman Canada magazine, the author of "Effective Networking Strategies" and a motivational keynote speaker. Donna travels across Canada and throughout the world sharing her contacts and teaching effective networking skills.



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