

# 10 Tips for Successful Business Networking

by Stephanie Speisman

Effective business networking is the linking together of individuals who, through trust and relationship building, become walking, talking advertisements for one another.

1. Keep in mind that networking is about being genuine and authentic, building trust and relationships, and seeing how you can help others.
2. Ask yourself what your goals are in participating in networking meetings so that you will pick groups that will help you get what you are looking for. Some meetings are based more on learning, making contacts, and/or volunteering rather than on strictly making business connections.
3. Visit as many groups as possible that spark your interest. Notice the tone and attitude of the group. Do the people sound supportive of one another? Does the leadership appear competent? Many groups will allow you to visit two times before joining.
4. Hold volunteer positions in organizations. This is a great way to stay visible and give back to groups that have helped you.
5. Ask open-ended questions in networking conversations. This means questions that ask who, what, where, when, and how as opposed to those that can be answered with a simple yes or no. This form of questioning opens up the discussion and shows listeners that you are interested in them.
6. Become known as a powerful resource for others. When you are known as a strong resource, people remember to turn to you for suggestions, ideas, names of other people, etc. This keeps you visible to them.
7. Have a clear understanding of what you do and why, for whom, and what makes your doing it special or different from others doing the same thing. In order to get referrals, you must first have a clear understanding of what you do that you can easily articulate to others.
8. Be able to articulate what you are looking for and how others may help you. Too often people in conversations ask, "How may I help you?" and no immediate answer comes to mind.
9. Follow through quickly and efficiently on referrals you are given. When people give you referrals, your actions are a reflection on them. Respect and honor that and your referrals will grow.
10. Call those you meet who may benefit from what you do and vice versa. Express that you enjoyed meeting them, and ask if you could get together and share ideas.