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Networking – 10 ways to do it better

By Roy Bartell

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"It's not what you know but who you know that counts"

Getting ahead in this world still relies heavily on the truth of the saying "It's not what you know but who you know that counts". Making the right contacts or networking is a vital element in a person's success. Here are ten ways to improve your own "networking" with others:

1. Never leave home without a supply of business cards – and don't be afraid to ask another person for his or her card!
2. Don't stay on the sidelines at professional functions. Mingle!
3. Carry something in your hands – a book, a brochure, a tape, even a cup of coffee – this will make you feel less self conscious.
4. Do not "sell" while you're "networking". It's your goal to meet people, not close a business deal.
5. Attend "networking" functions with a friend who can introduce you to others in attendance.
6. Dress for the occasion.
7. Ask questions; you'll make a better impression than if you keep the entire conversation focused on yourself and all you've done.
8. Follow up with a "nice to meet you" note which is also a good opportunity to enclose another business card, brochure, sales literature, or even a newsletter if it will give someone a better idea of

your abilities.

9. Keep a contact file. This will allow you to call on people from time to time as necessary. Under their details, keep a note of any pieces of personal details they may have mentioned i.e. spouses and/or children's names.

10. Make referrals; your new contact will remember you for it!

"Networking" can work to your advantage for many months – even years – to come. Who knows? A casual acquaintance you make today may be vital to your success tomorrow. Just remember that when the opportunities arise, be yourself, show a genuine interest in the people you meet, and follow up leads! You'll never regret having made the effort.

Three Key Networking Principles for Women Professionals

By Michelle Goodwine

In order to break through the glass ceiling and reach gender equity, there are several key strategies that women professionals must adopt. One such strategy is networking.

There is no doubt that women, like men, need others' help to achieve our goals. Very few of us have gotten where we are in our careers without someone's assistance. Honestly we must admit that we may have been hired for a job because of whom we knew. And for us women entrepreneurs, much of the business we receive is through our personal contacts.

Networking Defined

So what is networking? According to "The Networking Book" by Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, "Networking is people connecting with people, linking ideas and resources." The book "Power Networking, 55 Secrets for Personal & Professional Success" states that networking is not: 1) Selling; 2) Using people for your gain; 3) Coercing or manipulating someone to do what you want; 4) Putting friends, neighbors, associates on the spot; or 5) Badgering people about your business.

Three Key Networking Principles

Based on these definitions, what should women professionals keep in mind when networking? The following three principles should guide every woman's networking approach:

1. Establish Relationships with Network

When trying to "connect" with people, try to find areas of common interest -issues, ideas or activities that you share in common with the other person. Effective networking is not a "one-shot" deal. True networking requires establishing a long-term relationship with someone. And the best way to do that is to find out about that individual on a personal and business level.

2. Be Honest about Your Intentions

State why you are contacting an individual for help. Do not say you would like to conduct an informal interview if you are actually trying to get a job offer from the meeting rather than information. Your honesty will result in people be more willing to assist you.

3. Reciprocate

Networking is a two way street. So if someone has assisted you, make it a priority to help her down the road. However, do not expect something for someone just because you did something for her. Sometimes that person may not be in the position to help you. However, personally I believe that if you help someone out of the goodness of your heart, it is the "order of the universe" that someone will help you one day. And remember, it has been said, that it is better to give than to receive.

These three key principles have one common element - treating people with respect. By applying these principles, we can enrich our lives professionally and personally.

Michelle Goodwine is President and Founder of Integrated HR Strategies, the only African–American, woman–owned strategic human resources consulting firm in the country. For more information about her company's services, visit

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www.michellegoodwine.net for information about her professional speaking experience or e–mail her at michelle@michellegoodwine.net. Copyright © 2004 Integrated HR Strategies. All Rights Reserved.

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Three Key Networking Principles for Women Professionals

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