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Three Key Networking Principles for Women Professionals

By Michelle Goodwine

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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.

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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

. Visit Michelle's website at

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.

Get Clients with a Small Business Networking Strategy

By Michael Port

Networking, Ugh!

Much like the thought of marketing and sales, the thought of networking may make you cringe. For most solo-pros, service professionals, and small business owners, they hear the word networking and it brings to mind the old business standard of promotional networking at 'meet & greet' events where it's understood and accepted that everyone is there to schmooze and subtly manipulate one another in an attempt to gain some advantage, for themselves or their business, which will increase their bottom line.

Who wouldn't cringe at the thought of spending an hour or two exchanging banalities and sales pitches with a phony smile plastered on your face to hide your discomfort, in an attempt to 'use' someone else to get a leg-up on the competition or to boost your profits, only to walk away with a pocketful of biz cards and the prospect of hours of work to continue the charade through email and by phone? It feels uncomfortable, self-serving and deceptive. Chances are all those biz cards you collected will end up in

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a drawer of your desk never to be seen again because you'll so dread following up that you'll procrastinate doing so until they're forgotten.

The good news is it doesn't have to be that way! The Book Yourself Solid networking strategy operates from an entirely different paradigm; it's all about connecting and sharing with others, and all you have to do to begin to employ it is to shift your perspective from one of scarcity and fear, to one of abundance and love. With the Book Yourself Solid Networking Strategy, the focus is on sincerely and freely giving and sharing, and by doing so, to build and deepen mutually beneficial relationships with others. It's all about making lasting connections.

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