

## Top Five Reasons To Network

In this article I explore 5 reasons to network. Networking can occur at social gatherings, a local event, convention, or gathering of peers. With today's online communities it also occurs on the Internet at the many Social Networking sites. These Social Networking sites are offering new and exciting opportunities but the reasons why we need to network remain the same.

**Reason # 1: Build Relationships with our Customers** When we build relationships, we automatically will receive opportunities to sell our products or services. In most business networks that I have attended, it is usually bad form to blatantly sell at a networking event. People don't gather (online or in a physical event) to be sold to. If I go to a store, I expect to be sold to, in fact if I don't receive sale assistance I probably will be on my way pretty quickly. At most networks we gather to learn about each other and build relationships with each other. I usually find that in building these relationships, the sales happen naturally. You get the request to contact them the next day, receive an email or a call.

Of course, in addition to trying to network with your existing customers, you are trying to reach new customers. Social Networking sites and Business Network events are great opportunities to introduce you to new prospective customers. We use this opportunity to share information about ourselves, help them with a problem and begin building the relationship and trust.

### Reason # 2: Build Partnerships

I don't mean look for a business partner in the sense of sharing the ownership of your company. Networks (online and physical events) provide the opportunity to meet people and build relationships with individuals that offer services or products that you don't. Let's face it, you can't be all things to your customers and do them all well, so building professional partnerships with colleagues can offer you the opportunity to offer a more complete solution to your customer. Offering a complete solution to your customer could just be the thing that keeps a competitor out. Would you rather have a trusted associated delivering some services to your customer or a complete stranger?

### Reason # 3: Reach New Circles of People

Extend your business into new circles. We all operate in spheres of influence. The people that we deal with on a daily basis, whether its socially or professionally. These relationships might be as a vendor or a customer. Or if they are socially, it could be varying degrees of friends and let us not forget family. When we network with others and introduce ourselves to new people we can begin building relationships with them and gaining their trust. Once we have their trust, we have the opportunity to access their sphere of influence. And the best part is that they will be introducing us, so there is an immediate trust level established between us and the people we are being introduced to. Word of Mouth advertising is the most powerful marketing for this reason.

### Reason # 4: Learn Something New

When I visit Social Networking sites or attend networking events, I always learn something new. Sometimes it helps my business and sometimes it helps my customers. If it can help my customers it gives me another reason to contact them and add more value to our relationship. The bottom line, if you are participating in a network and not learning something, you have no one to blame but yourself. You need to be open to the opportunity to learn and take advantage of the free information that is being provided.

### Reason # 5: Are Your Competitors Talking To Your Customers?

You can bet your competitors are networking. I'm not saying you want to match your competitors moves because you are then just playing catch up all of the time but you need to be out in the community, whether this is your local community or an online community. You need to maintain a presence and keep your company at the fore front of your customers mind. If you don't stay in front of your customer, your competitors will begin to capture the attention of your customers.

These are five solid reasons to network. It is an important function of doing business. Approach it with the right attitude and see what doors you might open.