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John H. Lee

JohnTheNetworker

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Contents

Networking For Beginners, The Journey Ahead	5
Conquer Your Fear of Networking (Discomfort Is Good)	7
Networking Is No Exception When Setting Goals (Be S.M.A.R.T.)	9
How to Set Networking Goals "Want, Have, Do"	11
Marketing Yourself Through Networking (The Plan)	13
A Successful Journey Through A Networking Event	15
Networking Personalities, Which One Are You?	18
The Networking Relationship Cycle (Business Buddies)	20
Contacts, Connections, Allies (What's The Difference?)	23
Networking Wisdom, The How's And Whys of Follow Up	25
Bonus Chapter!!	27
How to Host a Successful Networking Event!	27

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Networking For Beginners, The Journey Ahead

While we all possess unique strengths and are able to accomplish great feats going solo, eventually networking becomes necessary. I, for one, love to accomplish things and bask in personal pride over the fact that, "I did it" However, when it comes to improvement and going to the next level, an army of one just doesn't cut it. Yes, other people will play a role in your ultimate success.

So what is networking and how do you get started? The definition of networking as defined by Dictionary.com is; a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest. The key words in the definition are "support, sharing, and common".

You first need an attitude that you will openly and to the best of your ability support those individuals who could benefit from your product or service. Support here simply means that you will go above and beyond just customer service in that you will execute all activity within your means to assist the person in getting what it is they desire. A little sacrifice may be in order. Secondly, support also means, having a reasonable expectation that your kindness and sacrifice will not go unrewarded. The reward may not come directly from the people you help but by some form of

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reciprocity. Rendering service in a sincerely humble manner will produce these results. Remember, there are no short cuts.

Networking in the right spirit demands that you express a genuine sharing capability. You must be willing to share contacts, information, resources, and so on with your colleagues. Holding such things secret will only hinder your own growth and expansion into the next level. This is not to suggest being insensible or frivolous, but a healthy exchange of info, resources, etc. permeates abundance and helps to define the fruits of your labor.

Commonality is obvious as you embark upon your networking journey. If you clearly define the goals for your career or business, you will have little difficulty knowing which people have the potential to help you reach them. Just keep in mind that it is very important to help others to achieve their goals as well.

Consider all of the above as you follow through with your decision to network and get the results you're after. Better clients, a new position, a larger contact base, increased income, and even new friends can be achieved when you network with sound principles and a practical strategy.

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Conquer Your Fear of Networking (Discomfort Is Good)

Shyness is defined as; “An awkwardness or lack of self confidence in the presence of others.” [Dictionary.com]. If this sounds like you, when envisioning the chance to get out and meet prospective individuals who could help further your career, it’s time to employ a winning strategy and move to higher levels.

First, you must embrace the fact that fear is all in your mind and therefore can be controlled or eliminated. One way, is to generate the necessary motivation by clearly imagining and putting into perspective just how significant attainment of your goal will be. If you know it would be a dream come true to have a multitude of contacts, connections, and allies in your business base, it will do you well to engage in daily visualization exercises. Done correctly, this will generate much excitement, which will be the foundation of your motivation. You will now use this excitement and motivation to fuel the action steps in your networking plan!

Applying this technique can be likened to the training and development of Olympic caliber athletes. Bear in mind that major discomfort is part of the process. The commitment comes first. In making it, the athletes

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understand they must separate themselves from the norm for a predestined period of time and focus on a regular schedule of cultivation.

A runner, for example, must run at least 6 days per week, maintain a particular diet, work out in the gym, and get sufficient rest. This serious competitor must wake up in the morning knowing that pain and soreness of the joints and muscles is a sure part of the day if triumph is to occur. As all of this training transpires, he or she is mentally living in the exciting and motivating victory.

To begin “Rapport Superstar” training, you of course, need to make a commitment to your ultimate goal. As you take the pledge, understand that there is to be discomfort. You must be ready to leave your comfort zone and experience awkwardness and blunders for a predestined time as part of your training. You must visualize your objective on a daily basis as fuel to endure the discomfort of a possible loss for words as you’re meeting a new contact for the first time.

You must awake knowing that you may make uncomfortable errors in your *elevator speech and follow up conversations. You must live in your exciting and motivating victory as you smile, shake hands, and introduce your services into the lives of future allies.

As you embark upon your training regiment towards a more productive networking voyage, become a member of Bizivents.com and find tons of business events in your area.

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*(An elevator speech is an informative 30-60 second description of your product or service.)

Networking Is No Exception When Setting Goals (Be S.M.A.R.T.)

When anyone wants to accomplish anything of significance, setting a goal is of paramount importance. A goal as explained here is simply a clear and definite outcome. It's a detailed vision or desired result of what you'd like to happen. This can include getting in shape, improving your financial state, bettering a relationship, or even a successful trip to the super market. Attainment of a networking goal is no different than achieving any serious goal and of course, requires a plan.

Here is a simple formula to reference when setting a goal, called the S.M.A.R.T. Formula. S.M.A.R.T. is defined as Specific-Measurable-Attainable-Realistic- & Time Frame. Being specific is the beginning of the planning process because it determines exactly what you want. If your goal is to be successful in 2010, it's not specific enough. You may want to clarify your vision by describing in detail what you consider to be success. In other words, what is the exact point you can say you have achieved your goal and are ready to move on to the next one? How does your

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goal resonate with all of your senses? How does it look, taste, sound, smell, and feel? Providing this information will give you the specifics.

Measuring a goal will bestow upon you the ever so important precise size or scale. If the details of your goal include a new car, home, vacation, money, etc., you must determine how much each costs or the amount you would like.

The next step is to establish attainability. By taking a close look at your friends, connections, contacts, tools, native abilities, imagination, and or whatever you have at your disposal, decide if this goal is within your reach through a practical use of your resources.

A realistic assessment may dampen your enthusiasm because of the size or scale. Don't let this discourage you. What seemed impossible years ago, is not today. If you would have told me back in '88 that I'd be listening to music, sending notes, and watching videos in my cell phone, I couldn't have conceived how. That said, being realistic means just being reasonable to move from point A to B to C, etc. with a grounded progression.

Having a time frame simply implies a start and end point. You may have many start and end points along the way as your plan is revised through the journey. It is also wise to give small daily or weekly tasks a time frame in order that progress can be tracked and adjustments can be made.

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Your networking goal may be to gain a strategic partner, acquire new clients, or gain employment. Use the basic goal setting formula to compile your networking goals. I will tell you exactly what needs to be done when configuring these types of goals in the next chapter and suggest honest experimentation and attending networking events in your area.

How to Set Networking Goals

"Want, Have, Do"

As learned in the past, we know that setting goals for any measure of achievement is of severe importance. It is safe to say then, that setting Networking Goals is vital if you intend on using networking as a means of advancement in your business. The following is what I call the *Want, Have, Do* approach to clarifying the details within your business goals. This is a great assessment tool as it keeps things reasonably simple but uncovers unseen particulars.

Depending on the nature and success factors of your business, you should know what has to occur in order for you to plant a flag and conclude your mission is accomplished. For example, if your goal is to achieve 10 sales in 1 month, this is known as the "Want". You may also

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add details such as 10 \$5,000 sales with executives or CEO's making over \$250,000 per year.

Now that the "*Want*" is clearly defined, what do you "*Have*" within your reach that could assist you in attainment of the prize? Take an analysis of your friends, contacts, connections, native abilities, etc. Use your experiences and imagination and connect the hypothetical dots. In doing this exercise, you may find a plethora of networking opportunities to strengthen and or create relationships leading to triumph.

As you take a clear look into your resources, you may make associations between people and institutions not previously imagined. This happens simply by knowing vividly, your desired result and applying practical possibilities to your vision.

If you meet with difficulty during the "*Have*" phase, and it's because of a lack of perceived resources, I suggest taking a keen look at what is easily available and cultivating growth and improvement. This will also answer the question, "Are the people and associations I'm attached to congruent with my career destination?" This is not to suggest eliminating loved ones or friendships. It merely denotes a sure necessity to align with favorable outlets. If aligning with favorable outlets is absolutely necessary in order to begin, you have just landed on the first step of your action plan or the "*Do*".

The "*Do*" is the bridge that physically separates you from the promise land. In the above example, 10 sales within a

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certain criteria of people is the goal. Any action plan has steps. The steps may be using your current network of people constructively to put you in contact with your chosen targets, or getting out and meeting them first hand. In either case, you can never have too big of a network and should keep encounters with new people, the right people, in your plans.

Marketing Yourself Through Networking (The Plan)

Any company creates a marketing plan to sell their best products and services and it should be no different when it comes to marketing your own best attributes. With just a basic understanding of marketing, self promotion can be a slam dunk.

From the start, it's fundamental to know your market. Who is in need of your product or service? A general marketing practice is to know your target's habits and how they will best use what you have to offer. It is good to know where they are and as far as networking is concerned, how to meet them directly. This can be any number of places including a networking event.

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Once you have identified your target and key people to meet, it's time for the marketing plan. Since you are marketing through networking, the basic phases of the plan are reasonably simple; Meet key people, Follow Up, and Continue Communication (Re-Networking).

Upon meeting key people, a good image is paramount. You must convey professionalism, trust, and credibility. Dress for success and let a smile, sincerity, and open ears be your tools. I should also mention to keep in mind that while your services may be top notch, the person buys YOU first. Your product or service is secondary. It is essential to project a favorable image to your potential clients that goes beyond conversation. It can consist of voice mail greetings and messages, email signatures, and personalized letters.

If you continue to have a result based mind set, the follow up portion of your plan can lay the foundation for years of productive activity. Initial following up includes a phone call, email, or even a visit which can lead to the ever so important, first official meeting. Based on the desired outcome of your plan, that meeting may include an interview, a presentation, and sometimes a proposal.

Follow up includes all correspondence leading to the objective. We constantly hear that following up is mandatory if we expect to get anywhere networking. I must emphasize that follow up is one thing but following up as a

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part of your Self Marketing Plan will be much more effective because specifics were established at the onset.

“Closing” is often viewed as the final step in follow up but is actually “Opening”. After the sale is completed, the door for Re-Networking has just opened. Knowing that meeting key people is the initial step of your marketing plan, your relationships with satisfied clients should lead to referrals and introductions. This is known as Re-Networking because you are deriving new contacts and prospective clients through continued communications with your network.

There are dozens of networking events in your city. Create a self marketing plan today and put it to work.

A Successful Journey Through A Networking Event

Networking is simply the process of meeting people, but with an underlying purpose. It takes on many forms such as encountering people at a social gathering, a professional networking function, or even online. Let’s use a professional networking event, like a business card

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exchange to summarize the process which can lead to more business and a larger contact base.

You should of course, have your goal in place before attending and be able to finish the statement; *“I will consider my attendance at this event to be a success if.....”* Be prepared with plenty of your business cards and an open attitude to be contacted by anyone and everyone you pass your cards to.

I believe in meeting many and filtering later. However, some have the philosophy of just meeting a few individuals and focusing solely on building those relationships. In a room of 50 people, I usually communicate and exchange cards with 30 to 40 or about 75%. I have developed many quality and productive relationships with this method.

If you use the Abundance Method, be sure to check the time and estimate the amount of people in the room. Your conversations can be brief and still have impact. You can accomplish this in most cases by using a line of questioning and being sincerely interested in what people have to say. Put your ears to good use and listen twice as much as you talk.

For example, approach with a smile, a firm handshake, and an open mind. After an exchange of each other's name and business, direct the conversation via quick

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interview. If you are at a loss for words use the acronym F.O.R.M. Ask about their Firm, like what they do. Next, ask “If you had the Opportunity, who is your ideal client?” The subject of Recreation is always a great topic at business

events as it takes one’s mind to a pleasurable place. So it’s ok to ask how they enjoy themselves outside of the office. M is for Meeting which can be a simple implication to talk at a later time. Keep in mind when using F.O.R.M. that there is no particular order in which to ask.

It is quite important to take notes as you go through this process. If you have a pungent memory you’re acres ahead of the rest of us and follow up should be rewarding. However, I recommend a pocket recorder or simply writing memorable info on the back of their business cards. It’s useful to have memory triggers in that follow up conversation.

Pace yourself and never forget the natural relationship cycle. There are many networking events in your area to employ these proven techniques. Find one today and get results.

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Networking Personalities, Which One Are You?

Attending networking or business events is nothing more than meeting people, but with a purpose. However, because it is an official task for bringing success

to a business, it deserves as much time towards development and growth as the business itself. As one progresses from novice to expert, there are many levels to consider. I'd like to describe common personalities you will encounter during your networking experience and help you advance a few steps to avoid costly mistakes. I have been some of these personalities at some point through my own development. Not to be too conclusive, I'm always developing and you should be as well.

We can begin with "The Deer in the headlights". This is usually a beginner who feels awkward and is somewhat terrified of meeting new people. So, they may keep a distance from the other attendees and seem reluctant to talk much or be open to give or receive business cards. As you may be more advanced, I would recommend giving encouragement and kudos to this person for attending.

Act as a host event if it's not your event. Being friendly and asking questions (F.O.R.M.) can help this

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individual to feel more at ease and an important contact might even be attained. (Firm, Opportunity, Recreation, Meeting)

The extreme opposite of “The Deer in the Headlights” we’ll call “Share My Illness”. This person literally regurgitates too much information about what they do or have to offer without letting you get a word in. They rarely take the time to find out if you are interested in

learning that much about them let alone show an interest in what you have to offer or your needs.

Healthy networking implies an equal or necessary sharing of information among one another and it is a smart idea to ask if the person with whom you are speaking would like to learn more. This not only saves time, it shows genuine concern and forms a more balanced conversation.

Just below “Share My Illness” is “The Turbo Closer”. They may not say it directly, but their motto seems to be “Hi, nice to meet you, let’s do business.” After a brief introduction and an exchange of business info, it may be suggested to meet up ASAP (Right Now, in some cases) to do business. A seasoned networker and any consumer know that without credibility, trust, and a practical sequence of events, a sale or furtherance of correspondence is not going to happen.

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There are many more types to describe but at any rate those who are attending events and using the above practices are undoubtedly finding networking counter-productive. This is only because of the lack of development and doing things in an ineffective manner. You can find many great networking events to make contacts and increase profits by becoming a member of Bizivents.com.

The Networking Relationship Cycle (Business Buddies)

How many people do you know? How many are good friends and how many are close friends? What is the number of acquaintances or just plain associates? What ever the sum total may be, it's a fact that these affiliations are at different levels of maturation. In the business networking arena, the sequence of relationship growth runs many parallels and particular differences with our everyday friendly alliances.

A relationship's cycle includes three basic but definitive stages; Introduction and familiarity, commonality, and bonding. Introduction doesn't simply embody meeting each other. It includes second or third encounters in which

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individuals grow more familiar and learn more about each other. As this stage progresses, discoveries are made regarding common interests, beliefs, and values. As most of us are much more comfortable around people with whom we are similar, bonding begins and the duration and strength of the union is determined by the expansion of this stage. Bear in mind that the speed of the progression varies in each relationship.

Consider your very best friends and how those relationships unfolded. There was a first meeting or an introduction, followed by a second encounter, a third, and so

on. Throughout time, probably by default, you became more familiar and comfortable due to emerging commonalities. I say, by default, because there is usually no premeditated plan to become a best buddy. This circumstance is unparallel with that of professional unions because of the targeting factor.

When networking is aimed at a particular career goal, there are specific individual types sought out. It is wise to evaluate the natural progressions of your best personal affiliations and the current stages as a comparison and model to better develop your professional attachments.

Just as with common friendships, there is the initial meeting and good impression. A follow up occurs, which leads to additional gatherings. A comfortable but professional bond is established and during this time, you

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may discover similar personal aspects found in non-commercial relationships. Components like; a mutual admiration for a sports team, recreational activities, and many times, religious beliefs. Keeping this in mind, it is no wonder why many successful professionals enjoy each other's company in and out of the office. Such alliances may have begun informally but gradually evolved into the business realm or vice versa.

Take a look at the history and evolution of your personal associations to see how what transpired can enhance your business bonds. This does not suggest an

ounce of pretentiousness, as you should keep sincerity at the top of the list.

There are dozens of networking and business events in your area, get out today and form targeted friendships. Find the best business events by visiting and becoming a member of Bizivents.com.

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Contacts, Connections, Allies (What's The Difference?)

Regularly networking and meeting new people has its advantages when carried out with a goal and foresight. With your business intentions well in mind, your networking objectives will determine the depths of your commercial relationships. As you run the course of your expedition, a status check can determine which affiliations should be improved, maintained, or sometimes, eliminated.

This can be accomplished with a routine inspection of everyone in your network. It is feasible to induce desired results as well as discover new possibilities by placing your colleagues in three categories; Contacts, Connections, and Allies.

Contacts, in the most elementary form, are individuals whom you've met and established familiarity. There is no strong bond but there is potential for growth. Aside from clients, contacts usually make up the majority of anyone's business network. You may communicate by phone or email every so often but must make an evaluation every 1-3 months regarding the possibilities of these relationships.

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In making these assessments, take stock of the progressions and developments of your associations. Does continuance of communication seem unfavorable or even detrimental to your wanted outcome? Or are the possibilities becoming probabilities as the relationships strengthen? In the first example, it may be time to withdraw correspondence. However, if solid bonds are forming, it's a signal to move them into the next category.

Connections compliment your career destinations. You speak a bit more than on-occasion and have developed friendly yet productive accords. A referral or two may have been exchanged and you might have mutual contacts. Periodic meetings with connections are not uncommon and you may very well have transacted direct business with each other. Connections are like doors, or as the word implies, connect you to potentialities. The perspective is not always mutual, meaning that YOU may be a connection for someone else but not visa versa. To the contrary and over a period of time, if these unions deliver

profitable results reciprocally, consider entries into the final category.

True business allies are the zenith of all your networking efforts. Allies personify fully rounded professional relationships. Throughout a reasonable span of time, you have communicated often, met on a regular basis, exchanged referrals, shared advice, assisted one another, and

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even made the rounds socially. Even though the combined activities have proven to be profitable and of a business nature, you can also consider yourselves friends. On your road to success, how many contacts will you convert to allies? Consolidating your contact base will increase your chances of success if you filter accordingly.

Networking Wisdom, The How's And Whys of Follow Up

Because there are vast understandings regarding what “Follow up” is and the subjectivity of this topic, let’s clearly define what it means pertaining to this writing. Follow up is, all correspondence after the initial contact leading up to the objective. Post communication can be considered “Re-networking” or “Bond Building”.

Assuming that the first impression went well, following up is the next natural step. If favorable results are what you’re after, you were reasonably prepared during your introduction and set the stage for a potentially productive juncture. Setting the stage may have included a line of

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questioning designed for pre-qualification and listening closely while envisioning the possibilities.

Proper networking suggests always having a spirit of servitude and generosity. Be sincerely willing to first, give before you receive. You may or may not have a belief in karma or reciprocity but I can personally attest to the Golden Rule. Keep this in mind as you begin the sequence of expanding communications and give close consideration to the progressive cycle of a relationship. Good follow up talk, written or spoken, should not be unreasonably assumptive or suggestive. I will define the relationship cycle in future writings.

The content that was discussed in the first conversation is of major importance when following up. This includes, not only that synonymous with business but any other point of your conversation that appeared to be stimulating.

If you discussed recreational activities, hobbies, or mutual interests, it is wise to mention such things in subsequent talks. This not only rekindles the pleasantries of your prior encounter but helps to lay the foundation for the

comfortable evolvement of a bond. Do this, of course, keeping the desired outcome of your union well in mind.

It is true that you never get a second chance to make a first impression but that also holds true for the

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second, third, and so on. While the first may be the most important, it is very possible to cause deterioration of your good standing during the growth process. Be mindful.

Follow up is not to be considered strictly proactive. There is also the aspect of congenial behavior on your part when receiving ensuing contact from a colleague. You may have little to no interest in what is being offered or suggested but lending an open-ear where consideration is possible may uncover unseen possibilities and broaden your contact base. Expressing generosity in this way also suffices as a follow up communication even though it is of a passive nature.

Bonus Chapter!!

How to Host a Successful Networking Event!

Whether your business type is unique or overrun with fierce competition, holding your own event is not only an option but can be an opportunity for greater exposure,

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client acquisition, and even additional income. There are many facets to consider but with a clear goal and sufficient prep work, your event can be a success.

You must first decide the event's purpose and desired outcome. Is it to make potential clients and the general public more aware of your business? Is it to promote or introduce a product or new service to an industry? Or is it specifically for gaining new clients and a share of a particular market? Once you decide the purpose, you're only details away from envisioning the final outcome and assembling the plan.

For example, let's assume this will be a networking function to gain clients and increase the awareness of your business/services. The outcome vision is; new-satisfied clients and aware-accessible potential clients. You can also choose a target number for desired new clientele and the amount of revenue to be generated by each.

Doing so will help to estimate the profit to loss ratio in the cost of the event.

Consider how the guests of your event will benefit by attending. Since this is a networking function, the immediate benefit is mixing and mingling. Other benefits may include but are not limited to; free gifts from your company, including products /services or being featured in the registrant directory, received by all guests.

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With all of the above established, you'll need to pick a venue. Atmosphere is especially important since you are making people aware of your business. A professional event calls for a professional setting. Your event should be held at your own place of business if its' looks and feel accentuates your desired message and theme. If not, you can find places such as hotel meeting rooms and certain restaurants that rent out space with professional imagery in mind.

Here are a few helpful must have's for your event;

- Make sure you have a way to capture your guest's information, like a sign in sheet or a container where they can place their business cards.
- Name tags are always useful in helping attendees to identify and target whom they want to talk to.
- A friendly and cheerful greeter should be available with a genuine smile when your guests arrive.
- Refreshments of some sort many times will assist in adding to the comfort of the atmosphere.

Finally, if you know who you'd like to attend, a friendly but professional personal phone call or email

invitation can attract many to come. Remember, business

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people's contact information is very easily located. I'm not suggesting spam but sincere invites to an event that will serve them well to occupy.

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To your success,

John H. Lee