



CAN I HAVE MY TIME BACK?

11 Keys to Getting More Out of Networking

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Introduction:

In thinking back to the worst parts about networking your business, what would they be? Would it be the bad buffets, pushy salesmen or empty promises made by people you encountered? Most networkers that I know and have worked with are experiencing the “Groundhog Day” effect by having the same uneventful meetings over and over again without much to show for the time, money and energy invested. In doing some simple math, I calculated that I have attended over 500 networking events over the past 6 years. Without question the most important lesson I have learned in networking, as well as in sales, is **the importance of learning and improving from each experience.**

Today, I rarely have a bad experience at a networking event or when meeting someone one-on-one. The ability to effectively qualify events and the individuals I meet with is a critical element to my success in networking. By following the suggestions made in this book, you should be able to quickly and dramatically improve your networking. For more information about improving your networking skills or developing more sales, please visit my website at www.salesresultsinc.com.

Chapter 1: Attitude determines altitude



Let's start at the beginning with understanding people's behaviors and attitudes. I define behavior as, "a manner of acting or controlling yourself." **How you behave directly affects everything that happens in your life.**

This includes your income, relationships and of course, your overall attitude about things. Examples of poor behavior might be as simple as not cleaning the garage that has been filthy for years or not returning calls to a client in a timely manner. These poor behaviors have consequences, some greater than others. Over time, big or small, they add up. One of the most profound consequences goes on behind the scenes in your subconscious. The bad behaviors and broken promises pile up in one's mind and directly affect one's attitude. Every time you break a commitment with yourself or others, those poor behaviors chip away at your ability to be positive. As you may or may not be aware, **negativity is one of the main reasons why people fail.**

On the other hand, exhibiting positive behaviors creates opportunities and positive results for people. Making the follow-up calls after a networking event or finally cleaning the garage will make you feel good after the job is done. Displaying the right behaviors is invigorating and directly affects a person's attitude. Without a positive attitude, you are putting yourself at a distinct disadvantage. Most people can easily pick up on your

tone, what you're saying or how you're feeling and be immediately turned off. This is never truer than when you are networking to develop more business.

A great example of this occurred with a very successful past client of mine.

When she first started attending networking events, she had stars in her eyes regarding all of the wonderful people she was about to meet. We were thrilled to have such a positive client with great energy. Yet, over her first couple months of networking, something changed. People weren't returning her calls and her one-on-one meetings seemed to be a waste of time. Things got tough and she started becoming very negative. She talked in excess about how people were just there to use her and how much time she felt she was wasting with the "wrong people." A potentially nasty spiral downward was beginning. There were a few challenging conversations needed to get her thinking positively about networking again. What we did to change this situation and get her out of this terrible place was to focus on her own behaviors. She needed to commit to improving her networking skills, attend more qualified events, and exhibit better follow-through on her commitments. She needed to believe that doing the right things were going to make the difference in the results she obtained. After only a few weeks of working on her behaviors, she began receiving the leads she needed to grow her business. By working on her own behaviors, her attitude improved and everyone could see it.

As a human being, you have important choices to make every day. You either fulfill the promises you make to yourself and others or you don't. When it comes to building your business, you don't have a lot of chances to continue making bad decisions. Following the path of good behaviors is one of the key components to success in business development and in life. The reason we are all not multi-millionaires from reading the latest motivational book or listening to Donald Trump speaking is clear.

Without executing the proper behaviors, there is very little chance for success. It's not what we say, but what we do that makes us successful.

Chapter 2: Planning is half the battle

Whether you are a networking pro or a novice, it's always important to go back to the basics when networking. The first aspect of this is in deciding where to effectively spend your time. A few of the complaints I regularly hear include, "All of these events are a waste of time," or "If I have one more bad breakfast..." or "Everyone there is just there to sell me something." In addition to having a positive attitude, it is also important to educate yourself on best practices in networking. Here are some tips on being more effective right from the start.



1. Talk to people that network and find out where they go to network their business. Find out what the movers and shakers are doing to find the best events. In Chicago, there is a website called Networkingmonkey.com that displays all of the events for networkers to choose. Try to find an on-line resource in your area for more ideas on where to go.
2. Speak to the people who actually run the events and their most successful members to make sure there are industries or people that you have interest in meeting. For example, if you prefer to work in the business-to-business market and not in retail, make sure there are a number of companies in that B to B segment. Lastly, be sure to try out a number of events before you make a final decision to join one. Most groups will allow you to visit 2-3 times before making a decision.
3. Ask yourself "Who am I looking to meet?" and then take a few moments to write down what you consider to be your best prospects and potential strategic partners. This way you will be one step ahead of the game in finding great leads when you're out there in the crowd.
For example, if you are in the IT business, you would focus on people with many employees and many work stations.

In addition, you would target the individuals who know these potential prospects, like real estate attorneys, mortgage brokers and appraisers. When you look beyond what is right in front of you, there are often many untapped opportunities to connect with new strategic partners.

4. Before attending any networking function, it is critical to prepare your image for your audience. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so make it right. If you are looking to be seen as a professional in your field, be sure to dress appropriately. My recommendation would be to always dress the same or one level up from your prospective clients. Showing up in jeans to an event where everyone is dressed in business casual may be a problem for some of the attendees. The truth is that people make up their minds about someone in the first ten seconds after meeting. Well groomed hair, fresh breath, ironed clothes and a firm handshake can make all the difference in your first impressions with people.

5. My last point regards competition. Many of the groups that you will be attending may have one, two or ten of your competitors in attendance. This can either be a sign that you're in the right place or that you need to find another group to join. Find out how long your competition has been there, what their reputation is and if they are in regular attendance. Sometimes our competition isn't working the group well and may not really be competition at all. Do some research and speak with the other members to find out the real story. However, be aware that speaking to the event host or membership person may not give you the most accurate information as they may be trying to land a new client in you.

Having a more focused plan prior to beginning your networking activities can save you a tremendous amount of time and wasted energy. Follow my guidelines and you will be more effective in selecting and qualifying groups and events that are right for you.

Chapter 3: The A, B, C's of networking



One of the most common missteps for the busy networker today regards the ability to effectively qualify the people you meet while networking. Typically, it is not appropriate to judge people on their professional appearance, communication skills or apparent expertise in their industry. That being said, in networking, it is half the battle. You only have a limited amount of time to invest in meeting people in building your business. Too many “bad” meetings can dramatically take away from your ability to be successful in business.

One of the best ways to avoid wasting time while networking is to literally “rate” the prospects that you meet prior to meeting them one-on-one. After receiving a card from someone at a networking event, take 10 seconds as you walk away to rate that individual as a potential prospect by writing an A, B or C on his business card. The A's represent the cream of the crop - someone who really needs what you do or would make a great strategic partner for you. The B's are those prospects with whom you should share a cup of coffee or at least speak to over the phone to see if there's a connection. Lastly are those in the C category, or those people who probably aren't going to make the most effective use of your time. This isn't to say that connections can't be made with C's. Just make sure that if you agree to meet with a C, it's someone with who you had a successful initial conversation.

The final step to successfully using the A-B-C process is to remember the single most important point in effective networking...FOLLOW UP! Your time might as well be flushed down the toilet if you don't make the calls after the meeting. Call your A's and B's within 48 hours after the networking event

while they are still fresh in your mind and suggest a sit-down over a favorite beverage.

The benefit to using the A-B-C process will become crystal clear when you sit down with the wrong person. The unfortunate truth about networking is that it's not a perfect science. You'll know you're in trouble when the individual sitting across from you is trying too hard sell you on his product or service or when you aren't sure why you were meeting this person in the first place. By effectively using the A-B-C process you will make your networking experiences much more productive and enjoyable.

Chapter 4: Working the room

Another important key in networking is to understand the basics of working a networking event. Here are some important tips to being successful at the events you do attend:



1. Networking has the word “work” in it for a reason. You are not there only to eat, drink and socialize, but to create meaningful business relationships. Go there with a plan to meet and follow up with at least 3 new contacts. Giving out cards is a waste of time without collecting ones to follow up with after the conclusion of a solid conversation.
2. Walk up to new people and introduce yourself. Don’t be a wallflower waiting around for someone to talk to you first. If you are new to a group or event, be sure to ask the host to introduce you to the best people in the room or to your target prospects.
3. Ask the people you meet about their business first. Some good questions include, “How did you get your start in the _____ business?” and “What do you enjoy most about your profession?” or “What are some of the changes that have occurred in your industry?” If you find yourself talking more than the other person, it is much more challenging to learn about them and build rapport.
4. Connections are everywhere!! The majority of people that are networking with you typically have over 250 people in their network. One of their 250 contacts could be the right one for you. If you don’t get to know someone, you might not have the chance to meet the people he or she knows.

Questions that help us understand their level in the networking world includes: “How long have you been in business?” or “Do you do quite a bit of networking?” or “How do you typically get new clients?” Understanding the depth of their network can lead you to meet with them one-on-one.

5. Try to help everyone you can. Find out what your new networking contact is looking for and try to be helpful. This individual might be looking for certain industries to get into or a new idea on where else to network. If you can, try and make suggestions and build your networking “karma.” One word of caution here, be careful in giving business leads too quickly. I have been burned in the past by trying to help people before really knowing what they are all about. Be aware that many business professionals are not so professional, lacking the business savvy to return a simple call or say “thank you.”

Working the room doesn’t have to be a chore. Just loosen up and be yourself. Make it a point to ask a lot of questions and really get to know people. I think you will find that the rewards far outweigh the efforts.



Chapter 5: Paying the B-I-L-L when networking

A woman walks into a crowded networking event that's buzzing with energy. She looks around in amazement at all of the people engaging in conversation and wonders, "What are they all talking about?" After about five minutes of standing around and watching nervously, she decides to get involved in the action.

How does she comfortably get into the mix at this event? What questions should she ask people? How could she make a personal and meaningful impact on the people with whom she speaks?

While there are many options regarding the approach to overcoming networking issues, the focus of this chapter will be on building rapport through asking good questions. For the newer networker, this information may be enlightening, while for the more experienced, more of a refresher. Regardless, it is important to go back to the basics when you're networking. I have developed a simple acronym to remember the best topics to discuss during networking events. It is always a good idea to *pick up the B-I-L-L* in developing new relationships.

B-I-L-L stands for *business, interests, loved ones and life purpose*. These are some of the best and most appropriate topics to begin a conversation at an event. After approaching someone and finding out a name, begin the conversation by asking questions.

Business:

- “Tell me, what type of business are you in?”
 - ✓ This is a good starter question anytime.
- “How did you get into this line of work?”
 - ✓ Understanding one’s background is a great way to hear about a person’s history. Is your history similar? If so, build a natural affinity around it.
- “What do you enjoy most about your business?”
 - ✓ Again, you’re searching for commonalities with your new made friend.
- “What are some of the issues a business like yours typically has?”
 - ✓ This is one of the best questions to ask to uncover a possible problem that you might be able to address. As you may know, helping others is the cornerstone of effective networking.

Interests:

- “When you’re not busy building your business, what do you do for fun?”
 - ✓ People just love to talk about their interests and hobbies. Whether it’s fishing or golf, it doesn’t matter. Let them talk about it and remember to ask some good follow up questions.

- “You look really healthy, what do you do to stay in shape?”
 - ✓ Trying to uncover one’s source of fitness is a great way to build rapport. People who are in shape typically have some type of program or activity that they are really proud of and want to share. Complimenting your new friend isn’t a bad way to build rapport either.
- “Interesting background, where did you go to school?”
 - ✓ U of I or Harvard? Share sorority memories or discuss alumni stories. It’s always fun to talk about our alma mater or degree majors.

Loved Ones:

- “Are you from the area?”
 - ✓ This is a good lead into family-oriented answers.
- “I noticed you’re married, any children?”
 - ✓ This can be a sensitive question, so be observant before asking. Is there a ring? What age is this person? Try to find the natural affinity here. For example, if he mentions that he has been married 25 years and you only for 2, you may want to ask for his secrets on how to keep a marriage strong for so many years.
 - ✓ If there are children to talk about, have at it. This is one of the best ways to bond with someone new.
- “Where do your kids go to school?”
 - ✓ College or kindergarten? Whatever educational level their kids are, it’s easy to find commonalities here.

Life Purpose:

- “When you’re not busy networking, what are you most passionate about?”
 - ✓ Most people have something that they are truly passionate about. It may be their favorite charity, brilliant children or the Chicago Bulls. If you can get them talking about their one true passion, the relationship is building every second.

Networking and building rapport is a lot like peeling an onion. You must begin with the outer layers before getting to the middle. Asking some light questions and then digging a little deeper will allow you an insider’s look at your new associate’s life. Understanding people better and listening to their stories are two of the best ways to build new relationships. It’s no wonder that a person’s favorite word is his own name and favorite subject is himself.

The idea behind *picking up the **B-I-L-L*** is to hone in on the person’s life with whom you are talking. Forget yourself, your products or services for a short time and focus on asking great questions and really **listening** to their answers. People’s responses to your questions could be the key to a new friendship, strategic partnership or actual business for you. At your next networking event, be sure to *pick up the **B-I-L-L***.

Chapter 6: Being a “true giver” in networking



In business today, networking is a key factor in building relationships and increasing business year after year. Over the past 5-10 years there has been a dramatic shift in networking from years past. Business people are coming to networking functions in droves because traditional cold calling and door-to-door sales have never been more challenging. In business networking today, there are typically three types of networkers that come to mind.

The first and most common out there is the **taker**. This is an individual that attends events and tries to collect names as a way to push appointments and close sales. Unfortunately, these networking types tend to burn enough people that word quickly spreads and their reputation's blown. Sometimes they stick around and we can physically see people moving away from them at an event, avoiding them like the plague or eventually they drop out and we never see them again. We shouldn't be too hard on the taker, as getting sales is what they get paid to do. They probably haven't learned how to utilize networking effectively to achieve long term results.

The second type of networker is the fastest growing segment we are seeing out there, the **apparent giver**. These are the people that have heard the phrase givers gain and know how to play the game. Well almost... The problem with this group is they make a lot of empty promises and even ask the right questions, but rarely follow through on anything they say. Their usual ploy is to tell us how they can help us in order to gain our trust, but that's usually where it ends. On behalf of the apparent giver,

they may really want to help you, but simply don't have the follow through skills or more commonly, don't see immediate reciprocation from you and get turned off themselves. The most obvious downside to being an apparent giver is that your reputation might get damaged as you can be seen as someone who breaks promises. With the apparent giver there is a clear game plan in mind, giving is fine, but where's my gain? One might be using the givers gain motto or credo with little action to back it up.

And that's what leads us to the third type of networker and my personal favorite to partner up with, the **true giver**. This individual understands the big picture in effective networking; you must give selflessly regardless of what's in it for you. Being a true giver in networking is something that has to be learned, believed and applied. A true giver believes that you can never give too much and is always looking for connections for others. This includes clients, networking associates, family and friends. Now wait a minute "What's in it for me" you might ask? The truth is in the short term either something or nothing. In the long term, everything! You've heard catch phrases like "good karma," "giver gain," or "what goes around comes around," to explain how this works. At the end of the day, if you WORK at giving and do it with your heart, it will lead you towards your business goals.

Remember, effective networking might be inside of you, but it's also a learned skill. And just like any skill, it needs to be learned, practiced and improved on a regular basis. Try not to be discouraged by your past experiences. Read up on the topic or speak directly to the true giver in your existing circles, and ask how they found their groove. The fact is that it's hard work to start, but if being a true giver is inside of you, it could be the most rewarding business activity in which you engage.

Chapter 7: Creating the perfect infomercial

Before heading out to conquer the networking world, it is important to have an effective infomercial. An infomercial is your 60 seconds of fame or mantra. Everyone should have something memorized or polished to say to a group at a function or a stranger in an elevator. As with many aspects of sales, winging it is never the best plan. There are four key aspects to a



great infomercial. You need to prepare a 15 second to five minute ear bender that will effectively deliver your message. Here are the four steps:

1. Who you are and what you do- Keep it simple. For example, “I am an attorney and I help people with their estate planning.” Or keep it vague. For example, “I am an estate planning guru helping people answer tough questions about their future.” The latter might not be your thing, but if phrased correctly can inspire questions from your audience.

2. Your prospect’s PAIN statements- Think of the pains that people may have that you can fix. For example, if the attorney solves estate issues he might say, “We typically help people that continually put off creating a will and trust that would protect their children.” If you are someone in the audience that fits the criteria, then you might be interested in speaking with this attorney.

3. Your differentiator- Create a differentiator for yourself or your business. There are two important elements to this: 1. Is

what you're saying really different? 2. Does anyone care about what I am saying?

Use your differentiator to separate yourself from everyone else out there. The same attorney might say, "What makes (your name) unique is our 24 hour phone call return policy. We actually call our clients back in less than 24 hours or they get one hour taken off their legal fees." If this differentiator is really different and people out there really care, you are good to go. If you are unsure about your own differentiator, ask your happiest clients.

4. What to do next or action statement- Tell the group or individual what to do next. "If you are interested in hearing more about me, please see me after the meeting or go to my website at www.yourwebsitesname.com."

By following these four steps, you are driving home how you help people and what makes you different to your audience. You only have one shot at a first impression, so memorize your infomercial and say it with feeling and passion.

Chapter 8: Selecting your referral Dream Team

As we lean into another month of networking events and one-on-one meetings to build our businesses, we should remember the importance of being a professional networker. Being effective doesn't just mean giving selflessly to everyone you can, although that is certainly a major component. It's also about understanding who your "key players" are. Taking care of your most trusted and significant referral partners can mean the difference between success and failure in building your business. Here is a baseball analogy that might help you understand the importance of putting together the right referral team.

Imagine you are a scout for a major league baseball team looking for the best players in the world to play for your club. You would typically go out time and time again watching the players, asking them about their



background and maybe even their hopes and dreams. What are they willing to do to be the best at the game and win championships? After much searching, inquiring and qualifying, you decide to invite one in to play ball for you.

Does this new player go right to the starting line-up of your major league team? Of course not, we would put him into our minor league squad to see how he does. Only after he shows his true colors, talent and skills do we consider moving him up to the big leagues. So, how does this relate directly to networking? Many of the networkers I meet out there are traveling from event to event, meeting to meeting, not getting the results from

their efforts. If that is the case, this might be the secret formula you've been waiting for.

When developing the best referral partners through your networking efforts, follow the same general guidelines as the baseball scout from the major leagues. Scout for new and better partnerships at the events you attend. Meet one-on-one with the best and brightest to discuss how you may help each other. Keep in mind that you just met this individual and shouldn't put him on your main referral team just yet. Try him out first by asking yourself the following questions:

- Does this person truly get the true meaning of networking?
- What is the size and connectivity of his network?
- Is he the best at what he does, and can he prove it?
- How is he doing at referring you, as you refer him?
- Are you being more successful with this person than with someone else in his same industry?

Depending on how you answered those questions, there may be a great reason to either move him up, to the side, or out of your referral team entirely. Creating the "Dream Team" of referral partners takes time, patience and resolve. Making the experience a quid pro quo is the most important part of any successful networking partnership. Sometimes it is best to take baby steps forward with people you like and believe in, before rushing in too fast. Once someone has proven himself as a quality referral partner, get him in the starting rotation and win some championships together.

Chapter 9: Running a one-on-one meeting for results



Most people I speak with really seem to enjoy networking as an important part of developing their business. The belief that networking is a more effective way to grow your business than cold calling is widely held.

Typically, I would agree with this statement. Unfortunately, many business professionals treat networking much like the other areas of their business...they wing it. Usually, there is no set plan, execution or follow-through to get the best and most predictable results. If you have made cold calls in your past, imagine calling without a call list, phone script or suggested next step to discuss with the person on the phone. From a statistical standpoint, you would be in serious trouble. The same rules apply to networking; it's a numbers game. The key is to improve your odds and become more efficient as quickly as possible. After attending over 500 events and personally meeting over 5,000 people, it's more important than ever to be efficient with your time during one-on-one meetings. I would like to share a simple and effective way to decrease the amount of time invested while increasing your results when going on these networking meetings.

The first thing to remember is that qualifying people after an event is an important part of networking. This is not to say that meeting one-on-one with everyone you speak with isn't an option; it's just not typically the most effective way to go. Asking some good questions when meeting someone new is a good way

to qualify someone you may want to invest time. A couple good questions to ask might include:

- ✓ “How long have you been in business?”
- ✓ “What do you look for in a strategic partner for your business?”
- ✓ “Tell me about your networking activities and the types of people you usually help.”
- ✓ “Who do you currently partner with to get referrals?”

The idea behind asking these questions is to gain an understanding of his ability to give and partner with you. If you find that he is newer in business, is only out for himself or has an established partner in your industry, you may not want to invest your time with this individual. Since time is one of our most valued assets in business, we must be careful with whom we meet.

Now that we have qualified who we are meeting with and how he might be able to partner with us, it’s time to set up a one-on-one networking meeting. There is one critical element that most people skip when meeting with someone new: setting up an agenda. While there should be a more formal agenda set on the phone prior to meeting, I would like to give you the four step process for an effective one-on-one networking meeting. By following the suggested steps, you will find your networking meetings will be more successful than ever before.

After exchanging pleasantries and building a little rapport, you may want to suggest the following steps to your associate sitting across the table from you:

1. Explain who you are, your past and what you do.
2. Describe how you help people. (Provide multiple examples.) Ask “what you are looking for in a good referral?”
3. Discuss what small step could be taken to move the relationship forward or help each other in some small way.

After this agenda is set and agreed to by both parties, each individual takes a turn going through the steps for approximately 50% of the time that is allotted for the meeting. I would ask that step number four be held off until the end of the meeting where both parties can then decide if it makes sense to continue to the next level. The last thing anyone wants is having empty promises made or pointless next steps. On the other hand, by each person following this process, you can have productive one-on-one sessions every time. If there are open opportunities to help one another, this process will definitely help you. Whether you do a lot of networking or very little, having a plan will almost always result in a better outcome. The key to remember is simple: qualifying your meeting and setting a more specific agenda will assuredly help you save time and create better opportunities moving forward.

Chapter 10: Turning referrals into quality introductions

During these interesting and changing times, there are a number of ways to develop new business. One of the most obvious ways to get more sales today is by simply asking your networking partners for referrals. Unfortunately for most business professionals, this is something that doesn't come naturally. Not only can it be uncomfortable to ask, but in many cases referrals that we receive aren't qualified to speak with us at all! In addition to asking for a referral, we must focus on coaching our partners on turning an unqualified referral into a fantastic quality introduction.



The difference between a referral and a quality introduction is simple. A referral is a lead passed from a strategic partner that he thinks you should meet, typically including the individual's name and phone number. Unfortunately, many times this ends up being a glorified "cold call" where you have to chase after the lead that was passed on to you. A quality introduction on the other hand, is a completely different situation. This is an introduction where your associate provides the same contact information as before, but has contacted the lead for you and provided positive affirmations about how you met, why he uses your products or services, and most importantly how you helped him solve a problem. This pre-contact not only qualifies the lead for you, but sets the stage for a powerful and meaningful meeting to come.

Now that the difference between a referral and a quality introduction has been established, we need to eliminate the “head trash” we all live with everyday. I define “head trash” as the reservations, fears and past experiences that keep us from thinking and acting clearly to achieve the results we desire. For example, if you aren’t currently comfortable being asked for a referral from an associate, chances are you won’t feel comfortable asking for one yourself. Another important factor in removing “head trash” is your belief. You must truly believe that you are the best and most qualified individual in your industry and that everyone is better off working with you rather than anyone else.

Now all you need to do is put the two parts together. Eliminate your head trash by believing that you are the best at helping others, then upgrade the referral to a quality introduction by preparing the strategic partner on how to introduce you. For example, after asking your friend for an introduction, he might say, “I have a great lead for you. Here is his name and number.” Now you have to move the referral to a quality introduction by asking some background questions regarding the lead and replying, “Thank you, would you do me a personal favor? Would you call your friend and give him a little background on how we met, why you believe he should meet with me, and the results you’ve seen our clients achieve while working with my firm? Also, at the end of your conversation, would you make sure that he will accept my call?” In some cases you may actually want to role-play the conversation with your associate to insure he knows how to handle the introduction properly.

Remove your “head trash” and try this approach with your top strategic partners. You’ll see the difference in the introductions you’ll receive, how receptive they are to meet with you and most importantly, their interest in doing business with you.



Chapter 11: Social media: Is it worth it?

Social networking sites offer businesses and individuals both networking and marketing opportunities, all at no cost. However, if you don't know how to make your social networking site work for you, you might end up losing business instead of gaining it! Before getting into the best practices for LinkedIn, let's focus on understanding social media as a tool itself. Here's how to put your best foot forward in the cyber world:

Though there are many social media websites out there, it is important to select just two or three to focus on that will help you in achieving your business development goals. These goals might include: branding, marketing, sales, or even branding for new talent in your organization. Marketing 101 would suggest that you have a clear plan and definition of your objectives, strategies and tactics in order to head in the right direction.

Once you've selected the best two or three sites, focus on the core competencies of each. For example, if the media is LinkedIn, consider the media's various applications for your business. Whether you are looking to create inside connections, find new business leads or build your brand, it is important to become familiar with the site and understand its full potential. If you are interested in branding yourself as an expert in your field, check out the various **LinkedIn groups** that surround your industry.

Becoming an industry leader and a well known entity online is one of the newest and fastest ways to become famous. Eagerly answer questions and begin discussions that will allow people to see your expertise. A close friend of mine used this strategy on **Twitter** and became known as a foremost expert in his field. Less than one year after building his own personal brand, he was aggressively sought after for his expertise and experience in his field.

Another idea that has been of great help to me and my clients has been the use of social media shortcut sites like **Tweetdeck** and **Ping.fm**. These sites help you save time when using social media by allowing you to send out messages simultaneously from one site. Ping.fm actually includes Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn all in one, which is really useful for heavy users to ping all three sites in one shot. One benefit of Tweetdeck is that it lays out all of your activity into workable columns. You can easily view and manipulate the messages you've sent, mentions you've had, searches you're conducting and much more.

When using Twitter, remember that one of the most effective ways to find new clients or opportunities is to know how to effectively use the **search** feature. If you are selling a product and want to know if other people are Tweeting about it or to find out what your competition is up to, this is the feature for you. Simply type in the phrase or key words that someone might use when searching for your business and expertise, and then keep track of the search. For example, if you are selling a CRM product called ACT, just type in the key words, "ACT OR ACT CRM." You can also type in a phrase that relates to your search like, "What is the best CRM out there?" Either way, you have the opportunity to oversee the entire world of Twitter to see if people are speaking about your product.

Once you get a hit, you have the ability to begin a dialogue with the other party and see if there could be some business there or answer a question they might have. This can be a powerful tool for creating new business using social media.

Many users of social media often want to know how they can judge their results. Fortunately, there are a few useful tools out there to help in understanding your overall effectiveness with social media sites like Twitter. Check out **Twinfluence.com** or **Twitalyzer.com** to see how you are really doing on Twitter. These sites measure the amount of combined influence you are having on the Twitter community. They track things like, **Reach, Velocity** and **Social Capital**, which in part defines how successful you're being with Twitter. As defined by Twinfluence, reach is the number of total followers a Twitterer has, which includes first and second-order followers. It is a measurement of one's potential audience. Velocity averages the number of first and second-order followers attracted per day since the Twitterer first established their account. The larger the number is, the faster that Twitterer has accumulated their influence. Social capital refers to the average first-order network of a Twitterer's followers. It is the best way to measure how influential a Twitterer's followers are. By understanding where you need to focus your time and energies in order to get the best reach, velocity and social capital, the more effective you will be in obtaining the desired results.

Overall, the world of social media is changing every day. Just when we think we have it under control, they add another feature that improves on the last. It is an incredibly exciting time for sales and marketing people to take advantage and reap the rewards of working these media's. As for me, I am making

new connections and creating new business opportunities everyday from using these tools.

As a speaker on social networking, I do get my share of naysayers and non believers in the audience from time to time, but they'll come around. I believe this because if they don't, they may not be able to effectively compete in three to five years. Whatever you might be doing with social media, stay focused on the social media that make the most sense for you. By tracking and evaluating what's working and what's not, you will always come out better in the end.

Now that there is some groundwork laid regarding social media, let's talk a little about the best on-line tool for developing new business, LinkedIn. I have been using this site for only about two years and have developed countless strategic partnerships and actual business from the site. LinkedIn draws its power from 50 million business people that regularly utilize this tool for finding and making qualified connections for each other. Think about that, 50 million people and growing, that you have access to. From the smallest business owner to the largest CEO in the world, people are using this site every day.

Though it is impossible to cover everything that this powerful website has to offer, I would like to give you the three big keys to success in using LinkedIn.

1. Develop a solid profile- Your online persona or resume is a critical element to being successful on LinkedIn. If you were applying for a new job, would you hand them an incomplete or grammatically challenged resume? Of course not. LinkedIn is not different. Be sure to begin your experience with the site by filling in all the profile categories and

your current position or company.

Without investing the time to complete this, you are literally selling yourself short. If you are not the best writer, ask or pay for some help to get this accomplished. For an example of a professionally written and completed profile go to www.linkedin.com/in/stevefretzin.com.

2. Develop your LinkedIn network- Without people included in your LinkedIn network this site will do little to help you build your business. Fortunately, the website can automatically pull people from your contact lists like, outlook and Yahoo!. Before doing so, really think hard about what you are looking to accomplish in using LinkedIn. If you are looking to simply dive into your closest contacts networks to find opportunities, then maybe keep your network small. If you are looking to get inside connections to enter into major corporations, larger might be better. Once you have a handle on size, start inviting people to join your network. Be sure to include a personalized note along with your invitations, as the standard one is outdated and shows little creativity to motivate people to join you.
3. Develop a plan to use the site- Many people I have spoken with are on LinkedIn, but haven't done much with it. Like most things in life, you get out of it exactly what you put in. This doesn't mean that you have to spend your entire week on the site, but a few hours a

week might do the trick. Just like with traditional networking, scheduling time to use the site and work at it is the best way to get started and to stay committed to obtaining the results you desire.

Use the advanced search feature to locate the best connections for you. Type in the area, company name or industry to compile a list of the connections that meet the criteria you are searching for. Then look at which connections are the easiest to get into through your existing contacts. If you see that the CEO of ABC Corp. is associated to a close friend of yours, it might be an easy appointment to obtain. On the other hand if there are few connections into that individual, you may want to search again and try to get in at a lower level and work your way up. It's still a whole lot easier than going in blind or cold calling.

By using these three easy steps to LinkedIn, you are on a good path to begin obtaining the results, with less work than traditional means. It is important to remember that LinkedIn is similar to traditional networking. You must always give as well as receive to be a superstar. See what kind of introductions you can make for your network. Invite them to go through your connections for themselves and then make them happen. For more information regarding LinkedIn and social media, go to www.tekworking.com and see what upcoming seminars we have going on.

Epilogue:

Thank you for reading my best practices in networking. My greatest hope is that you will work at these skills and develop more new business. If you would like to speak with me directly about your networking issues or in building your business in a more efficient manner, please don't hesitate to contact me directly by email at steve@salesresultsinc.com or by phone at 847-317-1575. If you mention that you read my book on networking, I will provide a complimentary one hour evaluation of your business. I am looking forward to hearing your successes in the near future.

About the Author:

Mr. Fretzin is the Founder and President of Sales Results, Inc. and as such, provides overall strategic direction and leadership to the firm. Under his guidance, Sales Results, Inc. has quickly emerged as a top-flight national sales training institution. Mr. Fretzin has developed and implemented proprietary materials which have empowered business professionals, entrepreneurs and sales teams to achieve their goals. Accordingly, he is tirelessly committed to enhancing the sales and networking performance of his clients.

In addition to his duties at Sales Results, (www.salesresultsinc.com), Mr. Fretzin oversees the operations of four other organizations. He is the Executive Director for the American Club Association (www.chicagoaca.com), Co-Founder of The Executives Profit (www.theexecutivesprofit.com), President of Team Discovery (www.teamdiscoveryonline.com), and Founder of Networking Monkey (www.networkingmonkey.com).

Prior to establishing Sales Results, Inc. in 2005, Mr. Fretzin specialized in sales coaching, marketing management, and business operations in the franchise industry. Mr. Fretzin received his B.S. from Illinois State University in 1993. He has been featured in Entrepreneur.com, NBC's morning show and was recently interviewed on WGN's the Bob Sirott show. Mr. Fretzin has authored numerous articles on selling, networking, and business development. His personal interests include family, golf and tennis.

Sales Results, Inc.

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