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All businesses, small and large, need to explore every possible venue to grow. A venue that is extremely valuable, but under utilized, is networking. Networking, sometimes referred to as relationship selling, includes the sharing of ideas, resources, and other information that can benefit all parties. The 'Networking Book' defines networking as people connecting with people, linking ideas and resources. In 'Network Your Way to a Job' and 'Career Success' states that networking is a communication process – exchanging information and receiving advice and referrals. Networking relates to results, relationships, effectiveness, and efficiency, and involves promoting yourself and others, giving, receiving, contributing, accepting and supporting. These words reflect a mutually beneficial relationship.

There are many benefits to networking: it has been shown to generate 80 percent more results than cold calling; referral business compared to business generated from advertising is easier to close and costs a lot less; and a referred customer has a higher sense of trust, has fewer objections and remains a client longer. Networking is typically far less expensive compared to an extensive public relations campaign.

Another aspect of networking today is the need for relationships. Ivan Misner, founder of Business Networking International and a best seller, coined the phrase "givers gain." Relationships are more important today because our work environment is in constant change, the workplace has become technological in nature, our job descriptions and roles have become broader in nature, we experience more stress than ever, and living without a strong reference group is a troubling phenomenon of modern times.



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## Networking for Success Don't Miss the Boat!



People, who fail to realize that in the end that all business is conducted through personal relationships, will fail themselves. The following are some opportunities for networking:

- Casual Contact: Any general business with membership including many overlapping professions. Ex: Chamber of Commerce.
- Strong Contact: Any group that allows only one member per profession or business that meets weekly for the express purpose of exchanging leads and referrals.
- Community Service: Any group that exists for the primary purpose of serving the community, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions.
- Professional Organizations and Associations: A single profession or business group, whose primary purpose is to exchange information and ideas.
- Social and Business Groups: Any group that combines pleasure with business with the emphasis on the social aspect. Examples of such are the Jaycees or a Gourmet Club.
- Women's Business Organizations

Your best plan is to visit several networking opportunities within each group and select a well-rounded mix of organizations to join. Make sure that you visit each at least twice and talk to the members to get your questions answered.

Remember, sales are like hunting for new customers and networking is like farming because you are cultivating relationships. To be successful in networking, you must first participate, communicate, education, and then reciprocate. If you haven't done any networking to date, then start now by sitting down and creating your networking referral marketing plan.