

Enhance Your Business with Connections

7 Ways to Build Strong Networking Relationships

According to Dr. David Schnarch's Networking is a great way to promote your business, but to make the most effective use of your time and money you must invest in building relationships. Strong relationships within groups create trust, respect, and a sense of community, making members more likely to use your product or service and to refer people to you. Here are some ideas for how you can build your networking relationships to serve others, the group as a whole, and your own business.

1) Go out of your way to welcome new members and visitors.

We all know how difficult it can be to walk into a room full of people we don't know, and how comforting it can be to have a friendly person welcome us. Remember that as a member of Connections you are not only representing yourself, but you are also representing the group. If you make an extra effort to welcome new members and visitors you will be encouraging new membership, creating goodwill, and making a special connection with a person who will probably remember you for being so kind when they joined.

2) Come early and stay late

When you plan some time before and after a Connections meeting to mingle and visit, you open space up for good things to happen and deep conversations to take place. Conversely, when you feel rushed people will sense your stress and will be less likely to approach you. The 20 minutes before and after a meeting is the perfect time to further build relationships with people you already

know, and make new connections with people you don't.

3) Support member events

A lot of time and energy goes into planning an event or workshop, and supporting other members by attending one is sure to build your relationship with them. Many events like open houses and seasonal parties are free, and some members are willing to trade for the admission to their workshops that have a fee. When you go out of your way to attend the events and workshops of other Connections members it gives you a better understanding of what that member offers, gives you an opportunity to meet new people, and the member giving the event or workshop will be more likely to support you in the same way,

4) Make coffee dates

Inviting a Connections member to coffee is the perfect opportunity to build a new relationship. Approach the date with the goal of finding out a lot about them rather than just promoting yourself and your business. You never know what you will discover about someone, and chances are you will find some way you can help each other in your business or personal lives.

5) Refer, refer, refer

Each of us has an extensive network of friends, family, co-workers, business associates, and community members we know and talk with on a regular basis. Chances are, during any given day one of those people in your network needs something a Connections member offers. When

you are talking to people, always carry your mental rolodex of members with you, and think of that list first when you sense the opportunity to make a referral.

6) When in doubt, ask questions

Networking with strangers often feels difficult and awkward for many people. When you feel weird about approaching someone new at a networking meeting, a really great way to build a relationship almost instantly is to ask questions about the person you are approaching. People generally like to talk about themselves, and they will think of you in a positive light because you expressed interest in them first. And, often you will find out something interesting that can help you continue the conversation.

7) Volunteer

Connections is member supported and member run, creating a need for many jobs to be filled by volunteers. Volunteering for a board position or greeter at a meeting not only supports the group as a whole and makes you more visible to other members, it also creates a bond between you and the other members who donate their time.

Kim Isley is the founder and director of Trees for a Change.com, an online business that plants trees as gifts. Connections was her first networking group, but it won't be her last.

Website: www.treesforachange.com
Email: kim@treesforachange.com
Phone: (707) 508-9262