

IMPROVE YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS TO BUILD BUSINESS>

A very well-known, international speaker and author on building customer relations and sales had the following to say on a recent blog:

"I'm doing what Mom said not to do...speaking to strangers. When I was little my parents advised me not to talk to strangers when my parents weren't around. That was good advice at the time, but good advice has a life span and this one has run out. Yes, it is still good for children to be cautious but for adults, we MUST talk to strangers! The only way that business will advance or most problems will get solved is if we intentionally, and consistently talk to strangers. Our goal ought to be to reduce the number of people who are strangers to us by several people a day, just by getting to know them. Salespeople must be skilled at connecting quickly with people they don't know, and building trust. New neighbors, coworkers, teachers, and service people arrive in our world all of the time. Let's become very good at talking to strangers, and making new friends of them every day."

(Jim Cathcart's Blogs have new posts and photos with his latest insights & stories.<http://www.jimcathcartsblog.com>. <http://www.highvaluerelationships.net>, <http://www.relationshipintelligence.net>)

We talk a lot about the subject of Networking, but do most sales people, in our hospitality industry, really know what it is all about? The whole idea, of course, is as Jim has reflected in his writings is strictly "to meet new people", with the thought of expanding your network. It is not that everyone you meet is expected to be in a position to give you business, although that would be great, but we need to know to whom they may be "connected" that could be in a position to be helpful to you in creating sales for your property.

Just prior to writing this column, one of our international graduate students approached me with a concern. He was getting ready to leave for Las Vegas to attend an educational conference where he did not know anyone else in

attendance. His concern was being able to network to his advantage. This particular graduate student did not meet people easily. It was suggested that first he understand why he is attending this conference; what were his goals to accomplish? He was seeking contacts for future employment in education at universities. Great, now we have an objective. Then was advised to find out how many people would be in attendance, to come up with a suggested goal of how many new people he needed with whom to make contact. From that he would want to come up with a goal for the number of those contacts who may be in a position to become a member of his "network"; that is, who may be helpful to him in seeking employment. Therefore, if 200 people were expected to be in attendance, and he can set a goal of meeting 100 within the three day period; perhaps 30% may be probable future contacts for his network. This means, that in the process of networking it is not enough just to greet, and exchange business cards. There must some conversation with each contact to get a "feel" for their value to becoming part of one's network.

To be good at networking there should be a plan, as indicated above, and one should try to exceed the goal of number of contacts. You do this by arriving early at networking opportunities; this means at all events that will take place at a conference of any kind. It could be for getting registered, attending a session, or a social event. Networking opportunities just go on all the time at conferences. Be the first to arrive and the last to leave. Do not be a wall-flower, waiting for someone to come over to meet you.. You must keep moving around seeking out people you do not know.

In networking, although individuals you meet may not be in a position to personally be of any kind of help to you, they may be connected via their network to persons who could be helpful to you in building sales. It is important to stay in touch with your network from time to time, keep building relationships.

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