

## Business Networking – Discover Your Next Customer

By Denise McGill

Networking in business is an essential ingredient in building loyalty with existing customers or clients and discovering that all important, untapped customer segment. What you need to remember is that it's not an "in your face" sales pitch, but a "getting to know" customers or clients in an informal, easy to approach manner. The key to networking and developing good customer relations is "listening" to consumers about what need is not being met for them in the marketplace.

Knowing the essentials of networking is crucial to developing client relationships and ultimately increasing sales. If you create an atmosphere of trust in your clientele, then businesses and individuals have the tendency to purchase product or a service from a company they feel comfortable with. These four tips will help you make those all-important connections, build lasting industry relationships and ultimately increase your sales.

### ***Keep the bond strong***

Before attempting to attract new customers or clients, stay in touch with your existing customers. They are already aware of your product and service and will purchase from you again. Start by developing a system (and schedule) for contacting them on a regular basis. Some suggestions would be to develop an email opt-in service so they can receive special offers, mail holiday greeting acknowledgements, and email or direct mail a monthly newsletter. Some businesses also stay in touch with customers through social media sites such as Twitter or Facebook.

### ***Just Ask...***

When you have completed a service for a client or sold a product, don't stop there. Ask for a referral. It is easier than you think. One example is to send the customer a thank you letter and offer them a discount if they refer a friend to your website or establishment. If you provide a service or sell product to a large company, ask your primary contact for the contact information of another department head that could also use your services. Once you have that information be sure to follow up.

### ***No man is an island***

Partner with a business that can complement your own – just make sure they are not in direct competition with you. For example, as a copywriter I could provide the written content, but partner with a search engine optimization company or a graphic artist. This gives the consumer a complete package deal if they need it. Rather a one-stop shopping, if you will. This convenience saves the consumer time and builds confidence in the consumer.

### *Talk it up at the Chamber*

Where else can you get the pulse of your community? Industry leaders, business people, and representatives from the local banks are typically members of your local chamber. They meet to discuss community concerns, develop future projects, initiate educational programs...the list goes on. Your local chamber is also a great source for mailing lists and business contact information. Be sure to offer informative tips when attending meetings, offer to be a guest speaker and submit articles to their monthly newsletters to increase your exposure. Be an asset to your chamber, not just a salesperson.

Business networking is about connecting with individuals or businesses and offering value. Address concerns, listen to ideas and take an interest in your peers. Once trust is built, customers will not only feel comfortable with you, but will feel confident in purchasing your product or service.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Denise McGill is a freelance copywriter specializing in catalog product description, copy makeovers, landing pages, promotional materials, sales letters, articles and more. Visit her website at <http://mcgillcopywriting.com> for more information.