

The 10 Mistakes We Make at Networking Events and How to *Avoid* Them

A Guide to Principled Relationship Building

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Introduction A note from Glenn and Mac

Networking. For some, a fear inducing melee of half drunk, over-talkative salespeople vying for each other's attention. For others, an absolutely vital revenue producing and ENJOYABLE activity. No matter which camp you are from, one thing is clear. Networking, if done correctly, produces results. The problem is, all too often, folks DON'T do it correctly. That is why we're here.

You see, we used to be in that first camp -- the folks afraid of the event. At times, we were even the ones producing the fear for others. We've made our mistakes. But, we now know what works, and simply want to pass that on to others. If we had had someone in our corner teaching us what to do at these events from the beginning, we wouldn't have wasted countless hours, doing the wrong things. Using the trial-and-error method, along with some fantastic wisdom from some of the referral and relationship experts of our day (included in the resource section) we have developed what we consider to be THE go-to guide for anyone who is interested in becoming more effective at networking events.

Why do we attend networking events?

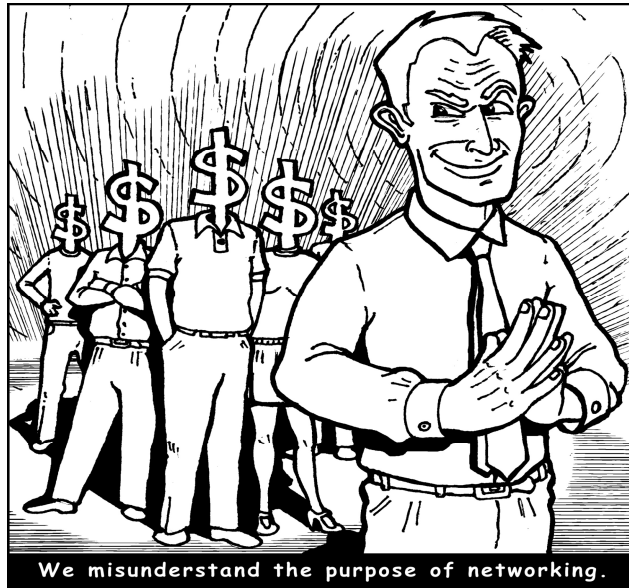
TO MAKE AND BEGIN CULTIVATING MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL REFERRAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Ok, we may have lost a few of you there. I know some were thinking TO MAKE SALES, or TO MEET PEOPLE. Ok, all of these things can and DO happen at networking events, but the bottom line is, the people in that room can be a part of your team IF YOU recruit them the right way. Selling to them the first time you meet them, annoying them with meaningless chatter, or offending them with your lack of people skills won't make it happen. Putting their needs first, showing them you care, and having a Go-Giver attitude will. So sit back, relax, and read through the list of the **10 Mistakes We Make at Networking Events and How to Avoid Them**. Memorize it, take it with you to events. If you master this list and use the principles we teach you, you WILL increase the amount of referrals you get.

Your partners in Referral Mastery,

Glenn K. Garnes

Mac Cassity



Mistake #1 We misunderstand the purpose of networking.

Imagine you have just opened the double doors of a large and vibrant networking event, let's say it's your chamber of commerce's annual gala. Before you stand two hundred well-to-do, connected, and most importantly, strangers. What do you have in your mind when you see all of those people? How do you view them as it relates to your business? Those that tend to see all of the attendees as nothing more than dollar signs ruin it for the rest of us who are truly interested in meeting professionals and developing mutually beneficial referral relationships. How many times have you heard "You absolutely MUST try my product!", or "I can help ALL of your clients, call me." These kinds of people are more interested in shoving their business card down your throat before even getting to know your last name, much less what it is that's important to you. They prey on the folks who attend these events. If they walk away with a

sale, they consider it a success, no matter that most were turned off by their approach and in the future will do what they can to avoid them. This is NOT why we attend networking events, of course. This results in Mistake #1, ***We misunderstand the purpose of networking.***

As we said in the introduction, the goal of networking is to MAKE AND BEGIN CULTIVATING MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL REFERRAL RELATIONSHIPS. That's not to say that someone won't have another immediate purpose, i.e., finding a speaker for an upcoming event, locating a sponsor, or, if the offer is real and the timing is critical, a sale may well occur. But, our primary purpose is and should be relationship building. What you want to do is not view everyone in the room as merely a dollar sign, but rather, as potential long term relationships and a source of possibly "endless referrals" for your business. If you were to view fellow networkers with the bigger picture in mind, you might just treat them with a little more respect. Realize that if treated the right way, instead of making 200 SALES your goal (if there were 200 attendees) you would make developing 200 referral sources your goal. Which would you rather have: 200 sales or 200 individuals sending you 5-10 referrals a year?

Sure, it makes sense, but look around the room at the next event you attend, You will see someone looking back at you as if you were that dollar sign. If you DON'T see that person, that person could be you...now STOP THAT!

Mistake #2 We only hang out with the people we already know.

Now, this is a tough one. You get to a networking event, and immediately you spot your buddy. You go over and talk to him/her and jump right into the swing of things. “How’re the kids, the job, did you watch The Apprentice last night...blah blah blah.” A couple of drinks later, a bite of food or two, another friend shows up, then another. The next thing you know, you are having a ball! What a great event, right? WRONG! This is Mistake #2, ***We only hang out with the people we already know.***

When we discuss this one at seminars, we hear the same things over and over again. People want to FIGHT for their right to hang out with their friends at networking events. They are extremely adamant that this makes sense as they are trying to deepen those relationships. Well, we say this, “If you knew ‘em going in, you will know ‘em going out.” As long as you didn’t ruin the friendship by doing something stupid, it will be intact as well. Yes, you want your friends to still like you and send you referrals, but chances are, they already do. You can do whatever you choose to at these events, but if you want to increase the referrals you get, you must follow these rules. There IS a way to respect your friendships AND get more referrals at the same time for both you and your friends, so try this at your next event. When you are at a networking event, and you see some friends you know, say this: “Hey, great to see you John. Look, don’t be offended if I take off to meet other folks. You see, since we already know each other, I want to go and meet some of the other people here and see if I can identify those individuals who might be good power partners or referral sources for you. If you do the same

for me, maybe we can meet back here at the end of the event and compare notes.” See what you just did? You were respectful to your friend, explained what you were doing and how it would benefit him, and then you sent him out into the crowd to work for you! Now THAT is leverage. Your friend is going to know you care about him even if you only spent about 30 seconds talking, and in turn, he is going to identify good referral sources for you as well. It’s really that simple.

We have found that this technique does two things very effectively. Number one, it keeps you on task as to your true intended purpose and two, it gets your friends ON task in the first place. Remember, at most networking events, folks are either trying to sell everyone they meet, or they are merely socializing. There are usually very few as savvy as you will be and this practice probably just reminded your friend why he/she is there in the first place. Consider how productive the events you attended would be if everyone quit making Mistake #2.



Mistake #3 We talk too much about ourselves.

Q. What is the easiest and most effective way to tell if you might be saying the wrong thing at a networking event?

A. If you can hear your voice and you are not asking a question.

This mistake, like some of the others, seems obvious, but just about everyone commits this error. The reality is, everyone loves to talk about their favorite subject: Themselves. We want you to recognize this mistake before you make it and to give you some tips on how to avoid it.

The last thing people really want to hear when they first meet you is your life story or why your company/product/service is the best and how it will change their life. People don't immediately want to hear why your customer service process is superior and that if they did business with you, you would make it an experience they wouldn't soon forget. We all have

been guilty of this one in the past. Almost EVERYONE has until they train themselves the right way. It is so easy to launch into your sales pitch when someone asks, “What do you do.” Sure, if someone asks what you do, you answer. But keep it short and sweet. Then turn the dialogue back to them. We will address how to answer the question “What do you do?” in a concise and meaningful way later when we tackle Mistake #4. For now, we will focus on trying not to talk so much about ourselves.

The way to avoid this mistake is simple, get the other person to talk about themselves. If you do your job right, then this is what you will eventually start to hear over and over again, “I’m sorry, I have been talking so much about what I do, but can you tell me again more about what it is that YOU do?” Even THEN you don’t want to go into detail. We will help you define your meaningful job description next, so once you have that, just restate it. Focus on THEM, what is important to THEM, not what's important to you. If you can be respectful, develop rapport, and start to build a relationship with this person and say AS FEW WORDS AS POSSIBLE, you really will be ahead of the game.

If you have moved into a conversational mode, and you are talking freely about subjects OTHER than your work, then you’ve REALLY made some progress. The talking too much rule mainly applies to talking about yourself and your business, not necessarily talking in general. We make this distinction because some people will take this too literally and show up at the next event having taken a vow of silence. SHEEESH, you wouldn’t think we would have to explain this...we do.

Mistake #4 We don't describe what we do in a way that is meaningful to others.

What comes to mind when you hear the question, "What do you do for a living?"

If you are like most people, and I mean almost EVERYONE, you answer with a job title:

"Realtor."

"Mortgage Broker."

"Sales."

BORING!!!!

If you want people to remember you, and what you do, you have to describe it in a way that paints a vivid picture in their mind of what you do. How many people do you know who "sell insurance?" If you attend networking events regularly, I'll bet you know a few. But how do you refer to them? Probably as "that guy I know who sells insurance." But how many people do you know that, *Spend time with clients helping them to identify risks that could prove financially devastating to their business or personal life, and show them simple and inexpensive ways to avoid the risks?* That is a description of an insurance agent, but one that is MUCH more meaningful to a potential client or referral source than just "insurance agent." There are 200 people in a room, and you have to make yourself stand out from the crowd without setting yourself on fire. Chances are, there is someone else in the room who does exactly what you do. I mean, unless you train one armed Brazilian wombats, the people you talk to will probably know someone else who does what you do. But if you are able to paint a vivid picture in their

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