

# The Myth of Networking

By  
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I run into people all the time who tell me in great detail about their networking activities. They swell with pride as they describe how they run from meeting to meeting making connections that could help bring them closer to their goals. Yet, none of these connections has actually produced anything more than the story they tell about it. That's because many people don't understand what networking really means or how to take full advantage of the opportunities a networking event presents. If you are really serious about getting what you desire, networking is one very important way to achieve it. But, before you choose your next networking event, answer these questions to improve your results.

**What is your product or service?** Be able to clearly describe what you do in a way that shows the results of your offering. For example, if you are a graphic designer, you could describe your service as just that--graphic design. Or, you could describe it in terms that demonstrate its value. "You know the products you get at fast food restaurants that tie into popular movies? My company designs the packaging for those products." What does your business do?

**Who is your ideal client?** Describe exactly who could benefit from what you offer. Include descriptors that represent qualities or characteristics of your favorite clients, the ones who are both profitable and enjoyable to work with. Create your list now.

**What organizations, associations or events attract your ideal client?** Where do the people you want to do business with go? What organizations do they belong to? At what events are they likely to be? Name them now.

**What is your primary objective in attending your next networking event?** If you say, "to make a sale" you will probably be disappointed. If you say, "to connect with at least three people who could benefit from what I offer and arrange for a follow-up meeting or conversation to further develop the relationship", you've got the right idea.

**What other reason might you have for attending this event?** Visibility! It's important to be seen in situations where your ideal client is likely to be so that you will come to be associated with that type of client. This leads to another question that will help you zero in on the organizations and events that will be most effective for you.

**What is your niche?** Your niche is basically your place in the scheme of things. It is the part of the world you wish to fill so well that you know your customer's wants and needs, problems and challenges to such an extent that your services are synonymous with that group. You probably already have a niche. It can generally be identified by looking at what categories your customers fall within.

**What's the best way for you to achieve your goal at your next networking event?**

There is only one answer. Focus. Focus on the people you meet. Listen, ask good questions and respond to those situations where the person you are speaking with shows you by his answers that he is your ideal client. Then make good on your commitment to follow-up. You will have shattered the networking myth and turned it into the valuable tool it is.

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