

# Winning Strategies For Dynamic Networking

By Diane Helbig



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## About the Author

Diane Helbig is a Professional Coach, specializing in business and sales coaching. She is a graduate of Michigan State University and received her coaching certification from The Coach Training Alliance.

Diane has spent the majority of her adult work life in management and sales with small, privately held businesses. From Supervisor to Director of Operations, she has successfully grown teams of people in manufacturing and service companies. She has conducted employee orientations and trainings. Throughout her sales career, Diane bested the quotas set by management. More importantly, she developed invaluable relationships with customers and peers. Diane excels at networking and believes that relationship building is the key to sales success.

Coupled with her business acumen are strong intuitive skills and a genuine desire to help other people excel.

As a certified, professional coach, Diane works with people in career transition, aspiring entrepreneurs, salespeople who need and want to improve their skills, and business owners who want to create more successful business development strategies.

Diane is President of Seize This Day Coaching and Co-Founder of Seize True Success. To learn more about these organizations, please visit <http://www.seizethisdaycoaching.com> and <http://www.seizetruesuccess.com>. You can also read more of Diane's thoughts on her blog at <http://www.seizethisdaycoaching.blogspot.com>.

Diane is a Platinum Author on [www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com) and was recently named to the panel of sales experts at [www.topsalesexperts.com](http://www.topsalesexperts.com).



## Introduction

Networking is an interesting thing. So many people think that it's all about quantity. These business owners and salespeople go to events to give and get as many business cards as they can. For them, that's a successful day. At the end of the day, what do they have? A pile of cards. That's it.

In addition, there are organizations all over the place telling you that to be successful you have to come to their networking event. There's speed networking, 50 contacts in 50 minutes, etc. Sound familiar? I submit to you that nothing of value happens at these venues. Yes, you acquire a lot of business cards. But, what do you know about those people?

There are also people who believe that just by joining a leads group or chamber of commerce they are networking. Joining is only the beginning. You actually have to work your membership and meet the other members.

This book is devoted to the notion that networking is about quality, not quantity. Your goal should be relationship building. You want to find people who you connect with; who you can build a relationship with that will yield you new business for years to come. It may not happen right away, but the better the relationship, the better the odds that more business will come your way.

We will cover three aspects of networking in this e-book. The first is how to network when you go to an event. Next we'll explore what to do once you join a leads group. And finally we'll talk about networking by creating strategic alliances.



## Keep Your Focus

When you go to a networking event, remember that your goal is to find people you can build relationships with. Effective business growth centers on relationship building. When you are genuinely interested in others, you are building a relationship. When you're giving, you are building a relationship. You are building trust. Then people realize they can count on you. They know you'll help them if you can. They, in turn, will want to help you. It's symbiotic.

You can't build relationships if your focus is on meeting as many people as possible. Blitzing doesn't work. Of course, you'll have loads of business cards.



You may even feel like you've accomplished a great deal. After the blitzing and card gathering, what do you actually know about these people? What are their needs, likes, dislikes, goals? Do you know how you can help them? Why would they do business with you?

Have you ever heard the saying "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care"?

The key to growing your business is genuinely caring about others. People see through someone who's transparent. Think about it – haven't you met people who **acted** like they were interested in what you had to say? You knew in your heart that they weren't really paying attention, didn't you? They had an agenda and it was apparent. You've probably been called on by that kind of salesperson. You knew they didn't care. So, did you really care how much they knew? Or rather, did you connect with the person who paid attention to you? The person who took the time to understand what your needs were, and then, offered a solution.

So, how do you grow your business sincerely?

1. Be yourself

- a. It takes less effort to be yourself than it does to create a persona. Besides, people can see the mask a hundred miles away. Their guard will be up before you realize it. Why? Because your focus is off. It's on you (or I should say, on your creation of you) – not on them.

2. Be genuinely interested in others

- a. Learn all you can about them. Find out if there are ways you can help them; have a positive impact on their day. DON'T sell them. People don't like being sold – do you? People DO like to feel respected. They want to know you have their best interest at heart. It's something you can't fake.

3. Be a giver

Don't focus on what you want to get. Focus on what you can give. 'What goes around comes around.'  
'The smile you send out returns to you.' Sound familiar?



4. Have a plan

- a. Plan to meet 1-2 people and learn something about them and their business.
- b. Be prepared with a couple of open-ended questions. Be prepared, but not overly focused. The conversation needs to flow. Once you've asked a question, ride it to where it naturally takes you. If you're busy anticipating asking your next question, you've missed their answer!
- c. When it goes well, suggest a next meeting in the near future. Don't expect to make concrete plans. Just float the suggestion and see where it goes.
- d. Finally, follow up that first meeting with an email, handwritten note, or phone call.

Remember, you're building a relationship. The key word here is building.

## Getting The Most Out Of Your Membership

Networking groups work when all the members understand why they're there.

Ultimately, it's to increase their own business. The METHOD is helping others increase **their** business. If everyone in the group focused on two things, the group will be tremendously successful.

**The first thing is** – building relationships with the other members. Remember, people do business with people they know, like, and trust. You can't like and trust them until you get to know them.

**The second thing is** – giving qualified referrals to the other members.

It's important to note here that there is the very strong possibility you will be unable to give referrals to every member of the group. There may well be people in the group who offer a product or service that you just can't help with. It's not about one for one, but more like paying it forward.

It's also valuable to notice that I've said nothing about focusing on what you can get. Because that's not how it works. You've probably heard that givers gain. It's simple and very true.

When you help others solve a problem, you increase your value to them and the people they know. When you connect two people, you are potentially solving both of their problems. \*The service/product provider or vendor by helping them increase their business and the buyer by helping them get what they need.

It's a win-win-win situation.



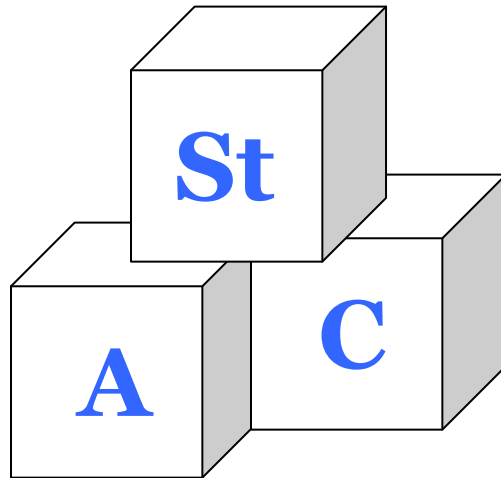
Now let's talk about referrals. There are three types of referrals:

1. **Cold** – these are not really referrals at all and should not be confused as such.
  - a. Informational – an article you read, something you heard, the name of a company, or even the name of someone in the company – though you don't know that person so you are no help, really.
  - b. This isn't a referral – it's a lead. It's information someone can use to dig deeper. It really doesn't help them get in the door.
  - c. These do have value because they tell you more than you knew before, but that's it.
  
2. **Warm** – This is where you know someone and tell the person you are giving the info to that they can feel free to make contact there. Basically, you've just given the name and possibly the phone number. And, the vendor can use your name to get in the door. Other than that, you've done nothing to grease the wheels.
  
3. **Hot** – These obviously are the best and because of that are fewer.
  - a. When you find out someone wants to do business with an organization that you are involved with, you make the initial contact and introduce your vendor friend.
  - b. You hear from someone you know that they have a need and you know there is someone in your group who you know, like, and trust who fits the bill. So, you tell your friend/contact about the group member and offer to make the introduction. You then let your group member know you referred them so they can be ready for the call.

Ultimately what you need to know is that effective networking groups take effort. The members understand the process and think about each other outside of the meeting. It's not unusual to get a call in the middle of the week from a group member who was talking to someone and found out they have a need for your services. That group member has offered your name and number and has then called you to tell you to make contact. What could be sweeter than that?

It's not about how many referrals you give; it's about how qualified those referrals are.

One last note – when you give crummy 'referrals' because you want to be seen as giving, everyone sees through it and your reputation suffers.



## Strategic Alliances Are Great Business Builders

Picture two gardens. One is overrun with weeds and the other is full of beautiful, vibrant flowers. What made the difference? Focused attention. The gardener who planted seeds and tended to his garden on a daily basis was rewarded with beauty. The gardener who planted seeds and then ignored his garden yielded nothing but weeds. The flowers couldn't survive.

In the same vein, the salesperson or business owner who creates and nurtures strategic alliances will see his sales grow. Why strategic alliances? Because they sell your business for you. And, they provide you with additional resources to offer to your clients and prospects. This makes you more valuable to the people you know and meet.

There are three easy steps to creating strategic alliances:

- **Think about your target market.** Why do they need your product or service? Who are they talking to? Who knows what they need? They're talking to someone. Those are the people you want to ally yourself with. It may be a small business banker, or cpa. Maybe it's their massotherapist. Don't laugh. Most people vent while getting a massage.

- Once you've got some categories, **find those people you can build a relationship with.** Just because they fit the segment, doesn't mean you're going to click with them.



- **Develop the relationship.** It's critical that you are taking the time to develop relationships with your allies. You want to be invested in them, and vice versa. For **long term** business growth, you need **long term** relationships.

Remember the garden.

Now you have extra ears and eyes looking out for possible customers. You also have extra mouths talking about your business. Good news travels. Before you know it, all kinds of people will be talking about your product or service. And, you'll be talking about theirs.

Your business garden will grow and flourish, yielding beautiful results for years to come!

## Conclusion

As you can see, the key to effective networking is seeing it as relationship building, not as a numbers game. When you meet people with the intention of really getting to know them, building a relationship with them, and helping them where you can, you'll be setting the foundation for your own business growth.

While these relationships can take some time and effort to develop, the business you'll realize from them will grow over time. You'll find that your network will spread out through those people and connections will be made where you least expect them.

Like an intricate spider web your network will expand over time.

So, as you venture out to network with other business owners and salespeople, remember the ideas outlined above. While it takes work and time, the results are endless!

Interested in further networking exploration? Contact Diane for a 'Networking Breakthrough' Coaching Session at [diane@seizethisdaycoaching.com](mailto:diane@seizethisdaycoaching.com). Or give her a call at 216-534-2030.

