

## NETWORKING SKILLS TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

### **What is networking?**

- It is about simple, easy conversation to establish common ground – the art of engaging someone in conversation that ultimately leads to a mutually beneficial relationship.
- It is one way of identifying and exploring opportunities to help someone, which may mean possible new work, by encouraging the people you meet to talk about their businesses and work.
- It is a way of building relationships with people who may be influencers of, or provide word of mouth marketing to, others who may consequently be guided by their colleagues and use your services.

### **What networking is not.**

- Networking is not a competition of who is the smartest or knows the most.
- Networking is about doing more listening than talking. You are not trying to sell yourself or your service at this point – you are trying to make an acquaintance.
- Networking is not hard selling of your capability and services.

### **What are the key ingredients of networking success**

#### 1. Preparation

Having decided to attend an event, if you know who the guests will be, find out their background beforehand. However, if it is an industry-based event, find out the hot topics in that industry.

If it is a general event like a Chamber of Commerce lunch, read the newspaper so you can comment on something topical to start the conversation.

- #### 2. Prepare a short snappy introduction about yourself that can be used when you are asked what you do.

### **At the event**

- #### 1. Relax and smile – make eye contact with the person you are going to talk to.

2. Ask open-ended questions in networking conversations. This means questions that ask who, what, where, when and how as opposed to questions which can be answered with a yes or a no. This form of question opens up discussion and shows people you are interested in them. Such as “what did you think of the last speaker?”
3. Follow up the first question with another, encouraging people to expand and explain more. Aim to spend at least 5 minutes with each person
4. If it becomes obvious that you might be able to assist or you have some mutual interest, ask for their card and give yours. Say you will send some information the next day. Or just say, “I’ve enjoyed talking to you. May I have your card and here is mine.” Have your card in your pocket so you don’t have to fumble trying to find it.
5. If you just want to move on to another person, use the same approach “I have enjoyed talking to you and would like to continue our conversation. May I have your card so I can contact you later” (only use this last phrase if you really do mean to contact them.)
6. If people are all standing in groups, walk up to a group and often people will make a space and let you into the conversation. If you approach a group and space is not made, keep moving until an opportunity to join in presents itself.

#### **After the event.**

1. Follow up with an email saying, “enjoyed meeting you” or send the promised information. This is the single most important thing you can do in networking because so few people do it. It shows you valued the conversation. If you continue to build mutually beneficial relationships with the people you meet, you never know how these will benefit you.
2. Do a debrief and record the information about the contacts, which have been made, or the new information learned about people you have met before.
3. If you get a referral through a contact, don’t forget to thank the contact for that referral.

Need assistance to put some of these techniques into practice? Arrange with Jan for some individual coaching.