

Networking for Results

THE POWER OF PERSONAL CONTACT

Hit the Ground Running in 2009

In the midst of all the gloom and doom forecasts for 2009, entrepreneurs, buyers, prospects and decision makers have never been more open-minded about new ideas, insights or opportunities. Your most productive business development success strategy is to connect with these prospective clients as quickly and as effectively as possible. Here's a five-point networking action plan you can implement starting today to make this happen.

1. Change your paradigm. First and foremost, stop telling yourself there is no business. There always has been, and will continue to be, a marketplace for your products and/or services. It hasn't disappeared. You already have a network of clients, colleagues and contacts who know, trust and respect you. This is one of your major assets and your most powerful leverage point to offset the economy. Put more effort into accessing and leveraging this resource.

2. Develop a sense of networking urgency. The start of a new year represents a positive perspective for just about everyone. It acts as a launch pad for new thinking and new activity. Use this to your advantage. You will have a distinct advantage if you accelerate your networking activity level from the first week in January. Be the first to contact, visit or connect with clients and prospects. Use the holiday hangover to bridge from their positive personal mindset to a productive business conversation.

3. Create a 90-day networking plan. Commit to a written two-pronged networking plan that includes prioritizing your highest-value relationships and leveraging access to new ones through your networking group involvement. Commit to staying with this plan for a minimum of 90 days. Base it on three outcome areas: results (sales, referrals, etc.), clients confirmed and contacts made. Review it every 30 days. There has never been a better time to use networking as an effective marketing and sales strategy.

4. Intensify your networking activity. Pick the networking group that is best aligned with your target market or ideal client. Join it if you're not a member and, if you are, make it a point to attend every event in the next 90 days. Set yourself new-contact goals for every event. Strive to make yourself more visible to the members via a presentation or contribution area. Invest in positioning yourself as a resource. Share your knowledge and your expertise. This will separate you from the competition and have others want to associate with you. Follow up on every contact that you feel has potential.

5. Focus on delivering value. This is the single most powerful anti-recession tool you possess. Think in terms of bringing, adding or renewing value to every person you know or meet in the next 90 days. Others will be amazed that you are willing to do this. They will remember you and recommend you to their friends and family. The critical success factor in having this strategy pay dividends for you is to confirm that your service or contribution has value for them. Do this by either asking before doing it, or confirming the value with them after you've made it. An unselfish, unrecognized act has no value.

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Michael J. Hughes is a recognized authority on utilizing networking as a business strategy. To find out more about him, or to have him present at your next meeting or conference, contact him at his web site at www.NetworkingForResults.com