



HOW TO NETWORK LIKE A BOSS

An objective driven approach to making new connections, building value-added relationships, and making the most of your B2B networking efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Networking is not simply showing up and seeing what happens. That's called wasting your time.

This guide will show you how to develop an objective driven and time efficient networking strategy, with tactics you can use to help achieve your desired outcomes.

It should also be noted this is not for the snakes in suits who only care about making their commission. Anyone can sell someone something once.

This guide is for those in the business of creating lasting and value-added relationships that put their clients first.

3 KEYS TO ENGAGING NEW CONNECTIONS



YOUR AUDIENCE



YOUR BRAND



YOUR MESSAGE

YOUR OBJECTIVE

Win New Business

Whether you are looking for full-time opportunities, manage the business development needs for your firm, or are in business for yourself, networking is that first crucial step in generating new leads and ultimately winning new business.



YOUR AUDIENCE

The first step in networking is to identify your target audience or the industries who have the most pressing need for what you do.

Businesses that don't want your solutions or even recognize the importance of their own problems, will take more time and energy just to get to your first no. I'm not suggesting these are not worth pursuing, but compared to someone who is ready to buy, the latter presents a faster return on your efforts.

Once you've identified your target market, look to understand the ins-and-outs of doing business in their space. Identify market gaps, needs, challenges, and goals, so that if given the opportunity you would feel confident in a conversation with the CEO.

New prospects should believe you have their best interests top of mind. A simple way to do that is to show them you did your homework and put in the extra effort.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONNECT WITH AND WHY?

Connectors & Referral Sources

These are trusted individuals respected by their peers who see the value in introducing new talent, resources, and information to the businesses they care about. Your goal here is to demonstrate what you bring to the table and who your ideal clients are. Although you are not asking them to buy from you, these connections are incredibly valuable as they can make introductions that fast track the time it takes to land a meeting with a qualified buyer.

Qualified New Business Leads

These are business decision makers who have a pressing need for what you do. They are the ones who can hire you, buy from you, and based on your research, are actively seeking someone who can help advance their business.

Strategic Intelligence Assets

These might be professors, professional association members, or retired executives. The key is they have specialized knowledge and access to insights that can help you engage prospects, discover new opportunities, and overall give you an edge over your competition. These individuals may be able to make introductions as well, but your primary goal is to acquire actionable intelligence for your new business efforts.



MAPPING OUT YOUR NETWORK

Once you have a clear picture of who you want to target and why, the next step is to populate your industry networking lists and organize your outreach efforts. At a minimum these lists should include:

- Companies that match your ideal client personas, key decision makers and their individual contact information, professional associations, relevant networking events & conferences, and news outlets or PR opportunities

DISCOVERING COMPANIES

- The Business Journals' Book of Lists
- LinkedIn & Other Online Databases
- Professional & Trade Association Member Directories
- National Convention Event Brochures and Directories
- Business Directories such as Hoovers and Dun & Bradstreet Tools
(often accessible at university libraries)

FINDING CONTACT INFORMATION

For names and titles, you can use LinkedIn, search by the name of the company, and then browse each company's employees using LinkedIn's search function. For small companies or if you are interested in senior leadership, it is also always a good idea to look on each company's website as well.

You can also use open source intelligence tactics to find contact information. Check out inteltechniques.com to learn more.

EXPLORING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

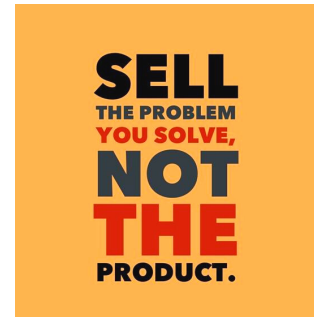
- Professional associations' monthly events & annual conferences
- Conferences that trade publications champion & promote
- Conferences and keynote speakers hosted by Universities
- Economic development organization events
- Convention centers and event venues that host major conferences
- Non-profit organization fundraising events and volunteer opportunities
- Online discussion boards like Twitter chats and LinkedIn groups



YOUR BRAND

The goal behind your brand should be to tell your story in a way that clearly communicates what you do, demonstrates the value you bring to the table, and establishes credibility and trust.

With your target audience in mind, develop a marketing presence that encourages engagement and makes your brand accessible at every step of your prospect's journey.



BUILDING YOUR PRESENCE

- **Value Proposition Statement:** Taking the time to write out your value proposition statement, or the statement that illustrates the problem you solve, not just the product you sell, will help tremendously in creating a narrative that will engage and resonate with your various target audiences.
- **Business Cards & Collateral:** If you want professional marketing collateral, but don't have a graphic design background, Canva.com is a great resource for creating business cards, client presentations, letterhead, social media content, and more. You can order prints from them as well, and the quality is phenomenal. If you already have your designs or want something generic, VistaPrint.com is another great resource for ordering business cards and other promotional material.
- **Websites & LinkedIn:** If you are a small business or want a digital presence for your personal brand, take advantage of any number of the mobile friendly and template based builders. My favorite is Wix.com, but others include Weebly, Squarespace, and Wordpress. As for LinkedIn, a well crafted profile will help establish your credibility and build trust.
- **Copywriting & Blogging:** If you want your website copy and other marketing collateral to resonate with your target audience, take the time to craft copy that speaks to their needs and the outcomes you deliver. You should also seize any opportunities to optimize your site for search. At a minimum this means making sure to incorporate keywords and phrases relevant to your target audience, but can go as far as publishing content for a blog or other sites that point back to yours.



YOUR MESSAGE

Your message is the last of the three crucial elements of a great networking strategy. Mastery of this particular skill set requires an understanding of what to say, when to say it, and how to listen for opportunities to engage and establish rapport. You'll also need to be able to navigate both face-to-face and online environments.

The following insights will give you the tools needed to compete against the noise of your competition and help engage your target audience. You will learn how to craft emails engineered to be opened, read, and answered, and you will learn how to make the most out of in-person introductions and how to engage new connections.

HOW TO WRITE A BETTER E-MAIL

Be straight forward with your subject line.

You want to encourage the reader to open your email, but don't try to trick or mislead them. If you've met them or have something in common, mention it. If not, suggest the nature of your proposition or an insight related to recent news. Examples →

"We Met At ____"

"Fellow Club Member - Can I buy you coffee?"

"STL Commercial Lending Insights"

"Referred by ____"

"Looking for an Informational Interview"

- Put your reader first, and make sure your body copy gets straight to the point. Don't waste their time. Ask what you want up front, provide next steps, and make scheduling easy by including your availability.
- Write with mobile in mind. Try to keep things short and sweet, but if you need to add details, use headings, lists, or attachments where necessary.
- Use language like "you" instead of "I". If you find yourself writing something along the lines of "I want this, I think we could be great partners, etc., stop. Instead rewrite it and make your reader the subject.
 - Example: *"Your talk from last Thursday was great! Your points on x, y, and z were inspiring to say the least. Would you (ask questions here)?"*
- Customize your signature line and include your name, email, phone, address, title, company, website/blog, appropriate social profile icons embedded with links, and any other useful information, but nothing too extra.



MAKING IN-PERSON INTRODUCTIONS & CONVERSATION

Below are three common scenarios and strategies to employ as it relates to walking up to total strangers and starting a conversation. These strategies assume your end goal is connection, and that the key to building stronger connections is common ground. You aren't trying to make a sale, you are simply trying to build a new relationship and explore what opportunities their might be between the two of you. As discussed earlier in the audience portion of this guide, they may be a potential referral source, business opportunity, or someone who can share insights and teach you more about the industry. Your goal is to find out and establish enough rapport for the follow-up email you will send the next day.

SCENARIO 1:

You go to an event where you are knowledgeable in an audience's industry, and if provided the opportunity, you would be confident enough to talk business with the CEO of a company.

- You walk up, smile, put your hand out, and introduce yourself. (*Hi, I'm Alex Burkart, nice to meet you.*) For most people this is the most uncomfortable part, and you just jumped on the grenade for them. They will most likely respond by looking at the company listed on your name tag and ask what it is you do. Boom! Here's your opportunity to tell your story and lead the conversation.
- Again though, this is not about you, it's about connection. Your goal is to make sure your audience sees the value in what you do as it relates to their business. If you have a relevant case study that illustrates your value, use it. However, if you are new to the industry and are looking to develop new relationships, your strategy should be to present an original idea, possibly one that challenges the status quo. All that hard work you put in learning about their business can finally be put to use in these initial interactions. Original ideas immediately tell your audience that you've done your homework. Consider for a moment how many people reach out to the same individual you are talking to without ever doing any research, only concerned with the quantity of their sales rather than the quality of the relationship. By introducing new intelligence and ideas, you will resonate without a doubt. This method of using raw intelligence to engage will allow you to make the most out of what will most likely only be a few minutes of conversation, making you far more memorable than your competition.
 - *Most events will provide you with a name-tag, but you might want to think of having a custom magnetic one made to help you stand out for all the events you attend.*



IN-PERSON INTRODUCTIONS CONTINUED...

SCENARIO 2:

You go to an event with an audience from a market you want to break into, but you have very little knowledge, if any at all, about the industries of those in attendance.

- Start your conversation out with some simple honesty, and tell people you don't know much about their business, but that you came to the event to learn and explore if there are opportunities for you to add value in the space.
- By making yourself vulnerable, you are asking your audience to accept you, thus creating an invitation for instant mutual trust and connection. This is perfect! You present yourself as genuine and non-threatening, helping put your audience at ease. All you have to do next is ask questions that play on the pride of the person you are talking to, and have a genuine curiosity for what they do. If you want to break down the science of it, in this scenario you are playing on an intrinsic value associated with the psychological esteem needs that we all share as a species. If you think about it, how many times does the average employee get recognized for their accomplishments and the work that they do. Make your new connection feel appreciated and admired, and listen for opportunities to dig deeper and learn more. You obviously never force anything in these situations, but if you follow this strategy, 9 times out of 10 your audience will want to learn just as much about you as you them. Once you put the work in, this will be your opportunity to impress, share your story, and explore if there are any hints about the potential of working together or other avenues for you to build this new relationship.

SCENARIO 3:

Whether you have knowledge on a specific industry or not, you attend an educational conference or speaking engagement you know will have networking opportunities.

- If there is a speaker or panel discussion at your event, there will typically be time for networking before and after the talk. Your objective should be to listen intently and take notes about talking points you can comment on or leverage to engage other attendees. Going back to what we said about finding common ground, the talk you both just participated in is something you will have in common. Build a conversation around that, and go from there.



FOLLOW-UPS & STAYING IN TOUCH

RECORD YOUR NOTES & STAY ORGANIZED

- 1.) As soon as you meet someone, add them to the networking lists you created earlier in excel or Google sheets, and send them a connection request on LinkedIn. (*Pro-tip: you can download a list of your LinkedIn connections, including their emails, to a csv file.*)
- 2.) Once they are added to your networking lists, take down a few notes about each new connection. Make notes about what their needs are, their interests, or other information that will remind you of ways to engage and add value. Also consider noting the day that you last heard from them, as well as any outreach efforts on your part. These notes will come in handy when a need or opportunity presents itself as time goes on.

WHEN & HOW TO FOLLOW-UP

- 1.) If your connection is a high value prospect, or the type where they engaged with you at an in-person networking event and you have since identified them as a potential client/employer, referral source, or an intelligence asset, you should follow up the day after the first engagement. (*refer to the email guide for insights on how to engage*)

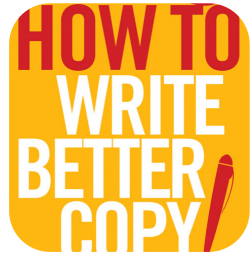
If you don't get a response, follow-up again 1-2 weeks later. If there is still no response, and you have their card, you can reach out by phone too. If you continue to not hear from them, don't give up until you do. However, consider moving them to an appropriate list based on the opportunity you've identified. For example, if you think there is an opportunity to work with them and they showed interest in that initial meeting, add them to a list of prospects to continue reaching out to on a quarterly basis. In terms of content, you might send them actionable intelligence about their business or other promotional content created specifically to encourage that next engagement. (*When you do schedule, make sure to include a reminder notification in the invitation for a day and hour before, as well as your phone number for cancellations.*)

- 2.) If it's a good contact, but there is no current opportunity to collaborate, staying connected on LinkedIn is a safe bet. These connections should be on lists designated as those to follow-up every year or two to catch up, share ideas, and as potential future referral sources.

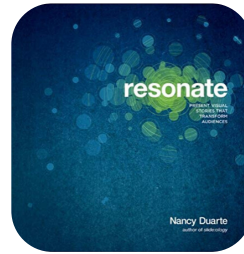
**THE END...KEEP READING FOR BOOK
RECOMMENDATIONS AND HOW TO GET IN TOUCH.**



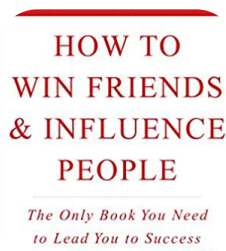
RECOMMENDED READING



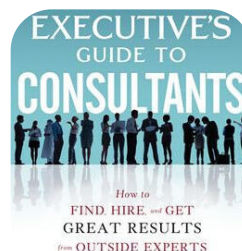
How to Write Better Copy, by Steve Harrison - This book is about, big surprise, how to write better copy. It will help you brainstorm engaging subject lines for your emails, body copy, and help you create target centered marketing materials, such as your website and collateral.



Resonate, by Nancy Duarte - This book is about how to resonate with any audience specifically as it relates to speeches and presentations, but applies across all channels of communication and will help you understand how to craft your narrative and tell engaging stories.



How To Win Friends & Influence People, by Dale Carnegie - This book will teach you the subtle behaviors and skills needed to make great first impressions and connect with anyone you meet. It is a classic for sure, and an absolute must for anyone in the business of building relationships.



The Executive's Guide to Consultants, by David Fields - This book will give you insights about how executives and decision makers think when evaluating new business propositions and third-party services. It will help you understand how to ask better questions, and position as a value-added partner.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexander T. Burkart, President & CEO Never Industries, Inc.®

Alex is a business intelligence analyst, with a strong foundation in marketing, communications, and strategy. A creative problem solver, with a talent for asking the right questions, he works with presidents, owners, and other decision makers, keeping them informed about their organization, market, and key stakeholders, so they can focus on driving their companies forward. From the initial discovery phase, through the execution of insight driven marketing and communication strategies, he helps clients identify and pursue opportunities to achieve and maintain excellence in their space.

Marketing Specialties:

- Market Research & Consumer Insights
- SWOT & Strategic Analysis
- B2B & B2C Business Development
- Strategic Marketing Planning & Execution
- Brand Positioning & Customer Journey Mapping
- Voice-of-the-Customer Experience
- Content Strategy & Thought Leadership

Communication Specialties:

- Organizational & Employee Insights
- Systems Analysis & Strategy
- Corporate & Industry Relations
- Organizational Culture & Communication
- Industrial Organizational Psychology
- Change Management & Employee Engagement
- Strategic Design Thinking



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