

# **The Best Marketing Ideas for Now**

## **Part Two - Networking**

Everyone tells advisors to “network”. It’s a challenging concept if you don’t think you’re a good networker. In reality, networking isn’t any more than having conversations with people at an organized event. That event can be social or professional. But no matter where you are, having good networking skills is important.

I have had two mentors around my own networking skills: Andrea Nierenberg and Michael Goldberg are my friends and colleagues. I have learned A LOT about what “networking” really is from both of them.

Last summer my husband and I left New York and moved to Tennessee. It surprised many of my professional friends since I have always seemed to be a “typical, quintessential New Yorker.” But, like my husband, I always wished to have been a country child and we made our wish come true when we moved to a 50 acre horse farm outside of Nashville.

After a year of taking time to settle in, I realized I wanted to “network” in my new community. Williamson County has an incredible Chamber of Commerce, which goes by the name Williamson, Inc. There are many scheduled events every month and for my first outing, I chose a Leads Exchange Meeting. It is not an “open” networking opportunity but rather a structured event with strict rules. Everyone can share their brochures and business cards with all attendees by just placing them in the middle of the lunch tables- or not. But you HAD to present yourself and your company, in one minute, during the formal introductions after lunch. You can imagine how important it was to be precise when you have EXACTLY one minute (yes, it’s timed) to discuss your work. And you aim to make a good impression. We were all given a list of the attendees, with space next to their names to write notes. That was very helpful! I was able to write key take-aways from the members whose businesses interested me.

In the weeks following, I have found help with my website videos and health insurance - just from this one meeting. I also had two lunches -- one with another consultant who wanted to “compare notes” since he’s new at being a consultant and another with a member who is on the “Engagement Committee” and discussed how to best use the Chamber.

Going to this first Leads Exchange meeting was easy for me since I have been well trained by my buddies on how to engage other people in conversation. If you’re not good at getting others to talk about themselves, and don’t see networking as being about the other person, it won’t work for you. But if you’re a naturally curious person and armed with good “conversation starters” you’ll be a great networker.

Too many people think networking is about telling OTHERS who you are, instead of first learning about them. Once you hear the other person’s story, when they say “So what do you do?” it’s easier to reframe your business in a way that relates to your listener. ***The more you know about them the better you are at talking about your business in a way that matters to them.*** Speak in benefits, not boring descriptions of your work. The best way to start describing your work is to be able to say “*You know when you said....., well in my work I .....*” And make it relate to their story.

When I meet other business owners, the best thing I can say is I help them to find new customers (or prospects). I tend to be attracted to people who are in sales (it’s like an internal honing device at this point) and it makes it easy to share the value of what I do with other salespeople.

Keeping in mind the concept of ***conversing*** instead of networking will take the pressure off you to “make a sale.” Networking is NOT selling. It’s not about even setting up a sale. It’s about creating a new relationship. And most relationships start out with the two people getting to know each other. That’s a good start at any networking event.

Here are some key points:

- Networking is a social event. Not a sales event.
- Keep your Sales Monster at home and enjoy meeting new people.

- Ask about others.
- Don't monologue.
- Get your contact info into their phones and vice versa.
- Try to set Phone Dates with people you like

*Remember: Words Matter!*

*Gail*

***The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.***

***Arnold J. Toynbee***