

Effective Networking – How It's Done

You've decided you need to network for the ultimate success of your business. But just how do you go about doing that networking?

It's not complicated and it's not difficult. At its most basic definition, networking is simply connecting with people and exchanging contact information. It's easy – but it may not be comfortable for you at first.

Even if you're not an extrovert, you can still be very successful at business networking. All you need is confidence in your business and what it offers. Use that confidence to help you reach out and connect with other like-minded business owners and you're well on your way!

When it comes to the “how” of networking, there are many ways to accomplish connecting with others, both online and offline. The following are just a few examples of places where you can (and are expected to) network with others:

LinkedIn (<http://linkedin.com>)

LinkedIn was created in 2003, and has grown into one of the largest business networking opportunities existing on the World Wide Web today. The United States leads LinkedIn membership at over 90 million current members. This gives you and your business an enormous opportunity to network and get attention.

LinkedIn offers niche groups that you can join to network with like-minded people in your market, and this can go a long way towards attracting people to your brand. Typically, no selling is done through LinkedIn contacts, so remember to keep your conversations professional and non-spammy.

Meetup (<http://meetup.com>)

Locate local groups that meet periodically just to network with other local business owners, or start a meetup group of your own! Meetups are excellent ways to begin learning the ropes of proper networking and tend to be very casual meetings. Depending on where you live, you may find everything from very small

groups to large event-type meetings. Go armed with business cards, confidence, and an “elevator speech” about your business.

Whether you’re seeking to expand your network online, offline, or both, set a goal of making a set number of new connections each week. Get to know the businesspeople you meet, and don’t forget that maintaining these new relationships is a large part of effective, successful networking.

Share your best content with your new networking contacts, and offer them real value based on your experience and expertise. Always aim to give something for nothing, as you never know who might have just the contacts you need in the future.