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### The Art of Networking

by Lorena Prime

Do you have as many clients as you want? If not, then you may need to brush up on your networking skills in order to attract more business. Networking takes some effort, but it becomes easier over time. In a referral business, such as Professional Organizing, you need to know where to spend your time and how to be effective when you are there. Here are some easy tips to improve your networking ability.

- ✓ **Don't be shy.** It takes courage to walk into a room filled with people you don't know. There are several ways to make it easier for you including...bringing a friend along who would also benefit from networking; picking another person in the room who looks equally uncomfortable – you'll both feel better talking to each other; and volunteering to work the event - it's always easier to talk with people if you have a reason to talk with them.
- ✓ **Choose the right groups.** You could spend a lot of time going from group to group, but is it really worth your time? Make sure that you understand your "target audience," i.e., who you want your clients to be, so that you can partner (network) with those who can connect you with these people. There are several networking groups out there, so ask around to see which group might be the best fit for your personality and your business focus.



- ✓ **Set a networking goal for each event.** You won't get to meet everyone in the room, nor should you try. You want to form a quality relationship, not just collect business cards. Set a goal for yourself to meet two interesting people that you could invite for a cup of coffee. This type of meeting is a great way to understand their business better and to help them understand yours. You are looking for someone you like that is going to be a good fit for your personality and your business.
- ✓ **Prepare your 30-second introduction ahead of time.** Don't just say your name and your business name – you need to target your message for the audience. Put what you do in terms of "what's in it for them?" What are they interested in? How does what you do help them....save time every day? Save \$500 dollars a month? Allow more time to make sales calls? Allow more time to see their child's soccer games?
- ✓ **Remember names.** After hearing someone's name, try to use it three times right away so that you will remember it. People like to feel important and forgetting someone's name is a quick way to inadvertently tell them they don't matter. To make it easier for people to remember *your* name, wear your name tag on the right side of your shirt. That way when people shake your hand, they will get a good look at your name tag.
- ✓ **Networking takes time.** You probably wouldn't recommend someone you just met, so people won't recommend you right away either. A great way to get to know someone better is to have a "one-on-one" meeting where you have coffee or a light meal together. You'll begin to know them personally as well as professionally and that helps you recommend them (and vice versa).

**Refer others (and you will get referred).** It's a two way street. Be a giver and refer others and you will be someone who gets referrals. When conducting one-on-one sessions with fellow networkers, ask what can you do for them, rather than telling them what they can do for you.

*Lorena Prime, Owner of Clearly Organized, helps businesses get and stay organized as well as manage time more effectively so that they can spend their energy on revenue generating activities. For more information, visit [www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com](http://www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com) or call 617-633-2199.*