

The Step-by-Step System to Building Your Small Business

**Helping small business owners around the world build
successful, profitable and rewarding businesses**

Module 4 Create Your Marketing System

Lesson 4D Networking

**Solutions and
Direction for tomorrow's possibilities**

Susan Brockmeier

www.CenterForTransformation.net

314-644-5223

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Introduction

Hello!

Networking can be an effective strategy to grow your business; however, business owners often place too much emphasis on networking.

For those who like it, networking seems to come naturally, and it would serve them to use networking as an Engine strategy to grow their businesses.

For others, it is not a good fit—and that is okay because there are other ways they can grow their businesses. The pitfall associated with the second group is “should”-ing on themselves.

Sure the “how to” network can be learned. But what is the point if it doesn’t work for you? The focus of this lesson is not to teach you the specific techniques to network most effectively, but rather to help you determine whether networking fits on your Marketing Train.

In this lesson, you will learn:

- Networking has nothing to do with you. It is about others. It is about serving.
- How to ensure effective, worthwhile networking when you focus on your target market and niche.
- How to view networking as a long-term strategy and alleviate the pressure to produce short-term results.
- That changing your expectations about networking opens up a whole new dimension of possibilities so that you feel much better about the process!

I encourage you to understand why you are networking, determine how well it is working for you and complement it with other proactive marketing strategies.

Good luck and have fun!

Best regards,

Susan Brockmeier
Owner
Center for Transformation
St. Louis, MO
314-644-5223

Overview

For the purposes of this program, I refer to networking as a marketing strategy to grow your business. Specifically, networking is going to events and interacting with people who need and want what your business provides.

It is important to look at the distinction between the verb “networking” and the noun “network.” Networking as a verb is the way most people use the term. It refers to interacting with others for the specific objective of growing your business.

To assist you in thinking of networking as a longer-term marketing activity, I ask that you expand your thinking and also view network as a noun. As a noun, a network is a large and widely distributed group of people or things that communicate with one another and work together as a unit or a system. When you network, you are not just meeting the people at that one event. You are potentially connecting with everyone they know!

Expand your thinking to focus on the possible opportunities derived from a limitless network of people. It takes the pressure off of feeling like you “need” to make a sale at a networking event. Instead, you can enjoy networking events as an opportunity to meet new and exciting people, appreciate the energy of the room, learn from the guest speaker. Then, when you meet people and articulate your *Who* and *What*, either they will want and need what your business provides or they might know someone who does!

Many business owners do not enjoy networking because they feel that they need to make a sale, impress the person they are talking to, garner interest and make an impact. No wonder a lot of business owners don’t like networking! When you take the pressure off networking is a lot more fun!

By the way, if you don’t enjoy networking or if it is not one of your natural strengths and talents, you have two basic options:

1. Do not use networking as one of your active marketing strategies...It is okay!
2. Embrace your natural networking abilities, and use this lesson to improve your results. Enjoy the process of learning. NO shoulds!

This lesson will help you to better understand networking as a marketing strategy and how it fits into your business success.

Benefits of Networking

As mentioned earlier, for many business owners there are often better ways to market your service than networking. I become concerned when I hear about business owners getting involved with three or more networking groups. They are always going to meetings...doing, doing, doing...moving, moving, moving...on this board, on that committee, working on this project, etc.

I caution you to be careful and not overextend yourself with networking activities if you are not getting the results you want. And, with that said, there are tremendous benefits to networking, as outlined below. I challenge you to reflect on these and add benefits of your own. The more focus and intent you generate personally (vs. just reading this lesson), the more benefit you will receive.

Exposure/Referrals

A great way to view networking is as an opportunity for exposure. The more people you interact with who want and need what you have to offer, the more your business will grow. Therefore, the group you network with can make all the difference – more on how to choose appropriately later.

Secure Clients

Of course, **you can and will secure clients from networking**. This is one of the big benefits of networking! And even though this is a benefit, I encourage you to focus on using networking “to schedule Complimentary Consultations” instead of “getting clients.” When you view networking in this light, you see that it is one step in a marketing SYSTEM, which helps reduce the pressure for immediate results.

Example:

Networking Event → Invite to join newsletter → Promote free lesson in newsletter → Deliver lesson and give value → Offer Comp Consult in lesson → Do Comp Consult → Secure client!

Do you see how attending a networking event can lead to a client over time? If all professionals based their successes solely on whether they secured clients from attending an event, they would consider the event a “failure.”

Give Value

Throughout this program, I emphasize the importance of giving value. The more you give, the more you will receive. Imagine asking yourself before every networking event, “How can I serve today? What can I give? How can I add value?”

Do you see the difference between this and “How can I get a client? How do I get Comp Consults? What should I talk about? How do I get people interested in me?”

Focus on listening, learning and giving value. You will have a lot more fun and get better results!

Practice

How good are you now at articulating your *Who* and *What*? Do you communicate with charisma, passion and conviction? I bet you could use the practice! Throughout the business-building system, I talk about the importance of professional posture. Well, networking events are a terrific place to practice. The more you communicate to people exactly what you do and how you do it, the better you will become. You will know instantly if your message is impacting people the way you want it to.

Greater Understanding of Your Target Market

Do not underestimate the power of better understanding your target market by attending networking events. You will learn a tremendous amount! Wouldn't you like to fully understand the needs, struggles, hot buttons, dreams, passions and challenges of people in your target market? You can learn these things by networking! How do you learn these things? Pay attention. Ask questions. Listen. What kind of speakers do they attract? What are the speakers' topics? Listen in, and benefit from conversations.

Energy and Momentum

We as people are social beings. We tend to want to interact, connect, touch, talk, socialize and laugh. Most of us do not want to spend all day, every day on the phone, in our office, etc. We want to get out and enjoy human contact! This, in and of itself, is a great reason to network! Think about how you will benefit personally, professionally, spiritually, socially and intellectually when you interact in a safe and friendly environment with other like-minded individuals.

Important Note

A word of caution: I highlight some of these benefits to help spur your thinking about the reasons why you might be networking. If you are networking for reasons other than to get clients, great! Just be sure you acknowledge the reasons why you are networking. Be okay with it—No “shoulds!” Also, be sure you are still doing your other proactive marketing strategies and not tricking yourself into thinking this is one of them if it really isn't!

How to Network Effectively

Using the structure and following the steps below will enable you to create the right mindset for networking. You will achieve far greater results and have more fun in the process!

Step 1 Manage Your Expectations

The first step in using networking to build your business is to alter your set of expectations. Instead of thinking, *I am going to get a client*, adopt a long-term approach. Review the list of benefits above, and focus on results other than just getting clients. This will allow you to be more expansive, less attached to outcome, more focused on providing value and more attractive! As simple as it may sound, it is the most significant factor when it comes to generating results.

Step 2 Set Your Intention

Once you have set your expectations, if you are a goal-setter, it is time to set some goals! Appropriate goals might be to secure two Complimentary Consultations, meet five people who want to subscribe to your newsletter or simply to make a connection with seven people at the event.

Also, remember to focus on other ways networking can benefit your business. For example, you can use networking to secure leads for speaking engagements, meet potential strategic alliance partners, generate referrals or learn about services and resources you need in your own business.

Step 3 Focus on Your *Who* and *What*

This is by far the most critical step! If you want to enjoy success from networking, it is IMPERATIVE that you network with people in your target market, people who want and need what your business provides. You should be very clear on *Who* you work with (your target market) and *What* you do (your niche). If you have not yet identified your *Who* and *What*, please do so before you spend time networking. This is critical in order to:

- Choose the most effective networking opportunities.
- Be effective at the networking event.

Many business owners have said, “Networking does not work for me.” However, about 70% of the time, these business owners were not networking with the proper group of people. In other words, the majority of the people at the networking event were not in their target market. They did not want or need what the professional had to offer.

Here are a couple of situations that make the point:

Example #1:

Marie is a professional coach who specializes in helping single working mothers to balance their personal and professional lives. She networks on a monthly basis with four groups: the Chamber of Commerce, the local ICF Chapter, the Rotary Club and a BNI group (Business Network International).

Example #2:

Donna's specialty is the same. She networks with Parents Without Partners, Single Moms International and is on the board of The National Association of Single Working Mothers. She also attends her local ICF meetings to keep in touch with her fellow business owners.

Between these two, who do you think is going to grow their business more effectively through networking? Certainly, Donna will have more success.

The importance of the congruency between your networking and your *Who* and *What* can not be overstated, so remember—a foundational KEY to networking effectively is to choose organizations that are congruent with your *Who* and *What*.

Consider the following idea. Does it paint a picture for you? It's goofy and simple, but hopefully, you get the message and see very clearly the relevance and importance!

**When you fish in a small pond LOADED with fish,
you do not even need to be a good fisherman!**

Step 4 Test Different Networking Opportunities

Since networking can take time, it is imperative that there be a fit between the places you network and your *Who* and *What*. Are their members potential clients? Are they interested in your service? You must determine this before you join an association and spend a great deal of time there.

It helps tremendously if you are personally in your target market! This makes joining associations far easier. For some organizations, you need to fit the profile. For others, this need not be the case. The only way to find out is to research and call in advance. Most will allow you to come a time or two before they require you to join. Many do not even require membership.

Within two or three visits, you should know whether a particular organization or networking opportunity is a good use of your time.

Step 5 Network!

As I mentioned earlier, this is not a module on the nitty-gritty practices of a star networker. There are complete books on this subject. One of the goals of this module is to take the pressure off you to perform, so you can relax, have fun and as a result be more successful.

If you are at the right event with the right people, if you are confident yet humble, articulate and passionate about what you do and if you resonate with a spirit of love and giving—TRUST ME, people will be attracted to you!

Should you happen to attend networking events that are not congruent with your *Who* and *What*, **do not try to be all things to all people**. When people inquire about what you do, use your *Who/What* statement. For example, “I am a fitness trainer. I specialize in helping married mothers over 40 achieve the levels of health and vitality they experienced over a decade ago.”

And don't worry if the person in front of you is a single 30-year-old businessman! Remember, network as a noun. He will likely know someone who fits your *Who* and *What*. Moreover, if you follow my guidelines and are attending the “right” networking events, the majority of the people there will be in your target market!

Critical Success Factors

Below are some of the keys to successful networking. Use this list to spur your thinking as you focus on your own unique “critical success factors” for networking!

Get Involved/Contribute

I challenge you to evolve from belonging to groups to contributing to organizations. While this approach takes more time and energy, being more selective and limiting your scope to one to three groups will enable you to go deeper and play more of a role within.

As you get involved with associations, you become better known. Your credibility rises because you are viewed as a leader and giver. Your focus, attention and mindset about networking will impact your results. Consider the following examples.

Example of Focus on Getting Something:

Fred goes to networking events thinking things like:

“I hope I get a client from this.”

“My goal is to get 7 Comp Consults.”

“What can I say that will make people want to hire me?”

“I am going to try to talk to 9 people tonight and tell them what I do.”

Example of Focus on Being of Service:

Charlie goes to networking events thinking the following:

“How can I serve people tonight?”

“I am going to like everybody at this event.”

“I am going to explore ways to help people.”

“I am excited to learn about others and support them in any way I can.”

Do you see how the first scenario is all about Fred? It is all about what he wants. Also, do you see how his goals are short-term?

In the second example, Charlie genuinely wants to help people. His thinking is more long-term and more about serving. Not only will Charlie enjoy himself far more, he will also enjoy far greater results!

Follow Up!

Following up is another important factor that will have a huge impact on your success. Too many people go to networking events, meet people, get business cards and then don't do anything with them. Consider sending handwritten follow-up notes. If that doesn't work for you, then send an email.

Also, don't forget to invite people to subscribe to your free newsletter. Make the effort to follow up and do what you can to “keep them on your train,” so you can continue connecting with them in the future and building a relationship over time.

Professional Setting

There is also a distinction between networking and socializing. After all, it's not called “Netsocialize!” It's Networking!

Sure, you can and should have fun while networking, but let's not forget the purpose in terms of marketing—to build your business.

Assignment Plan Your Networking Strategy

Do you intend to use networking as part of your long-term marketing system? If so, use this sheet to plan out your strategy for effective networking.

People I want to network with (examples of people in your target market):

Ideas I currently have for networking opportunities:

My next steps:

Concerns or challenges I have about networking:

My strategies to overcome any concerns or challenges:

Summary

By choosing networking events that cater to your *Who* and *What* and showing up as a professional who serves that particular group, you maximize your networking effectiveness.

Think about the “fishing metaphor” given above. Sure, learning to be a great networker may be a valuable next step for you. And, do you see how if you...

- Are clear on your *Who* and *What*,
- Feel confident and passionate about your service and the benefits it can provide,
- Target networking events attended by your *Who*,
- Participate in conversations instead of hiding in a corner all night,

then you can enjoy the experience and achieve results from networking?

Of course!

Finally, as much as I talk throughout this module about giving value, having a long-term perspective, setting realistic expectations, etc., **do not be bashful about articulating what you do for clients, who you do it for and how you do it!** Sound familiar? This is why you are at the networking event to begin with!