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smart **Business** matters

Advice for Success!™

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It's not about the free food – Networking is key to advancement

You know that networking is crucial to new business development. You understand that every business event is a chance to make new contacts and build your reputation.

Why, then, do you dread the power breakfast, lunch-time schmoozing, and after hours mingling? Is it the bland chicken dinner? Have you never mastered the art of balancing your wine glass in one hand and a plate of hors d'oeuvres in the other while offering your card? Or is it just a simple case of business networking burnout? It's time to re-tool your approach and brush up on basic skills to make networking productive again.

Develop your game plan

Taking time to prepare will help you achieve more at the next event.

- Define your objectives for attending. Is your goal to meet the influential speaker? Develop new contacts in your job search? Generate sales leads?
- Practice your elevator pitch. Be able to describe who you are and what you do in 30 seconds or less.
- If possible, review the guest list in advance and identify a few people you'd like to meet.
- Make sure you have enough business cards.



Work the room

The event is here, and you're prepared and looking your best. Don't be a wallflower, get out there and mingle.

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“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”

– Oscar Wilde

Small talk 101



Break the ice and start an interesting conversation at your next networking event:

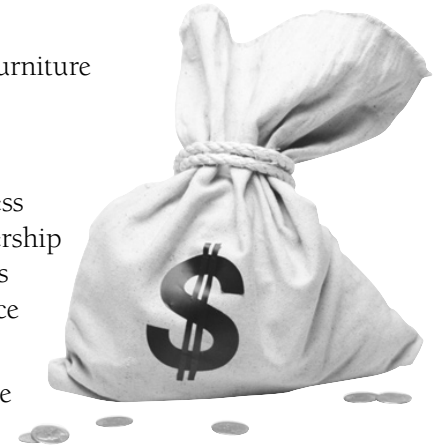
- What do you do?
- What do you enjoy most about what you do?
- What types of individuals or companies do you typically work with?
- Why do people typically come to you? What kinds of problems do you solve?
- How do you find most of your business?
- How long have you been a member of this organization?
- How has this organization been beneficial for you?

Buying smarter: Easy ways to stretch your budget

Finding creative ways to cut costs will boost profits or help you manage in lean times, when sales are slow.

Consider these relatively painless ways to enhance the bottom line:

- Buy recycled printer cartridges
- Purchase used office equipment and furniture
- Barter your products or services with another business
- Join an industry group or local business organization. For a reasonable membership fee, you could gain access to discounts on insurance, car rentals, phone service and more.
- Raise the deductible on your insurance policy and lower your total premium



Playing the domain name game

Many small business owners have tried to launch Web sites, only to find that the desired .com domain name is registered to someone else.

When this happens, you have a few options:

- Contact the owner and try to buy the domain name.
- Consider another domain name.
- Try to keep the name, but trade the .com for another extension, such as .net or .biz. As .com domain names are growing scarce, these extensions are gaining popularity and recognition.

There are many low-cost options for domain name registration. Just visit Google and enter “domain name registration” for a list of options.

**.com .pro .biz
.net .edu .gov**

“A man without a smiling face must not open a shop.” – Chinese proverb

Project a positive personality with marketing tools

Experts at marketing and branding contend that, over time, organizations develop personalities, just like people.

And, just like people, businesses need to be perceived positively to be liked and respected. Projecting a positive personality to your constituents – with a polished corporate identity and high quality marketing materials – helps to ensure that you and your company are seen as stable and expert in your field.

Focus on quality and consistency

Every business needs marketing tools that work together to communicate a consistent image and message about the value it brings to customers.

- A logo instantly declares your identity. A unique logo and tagline can make an impression in a split second or fade from memory just as quickly.
- Invest in a professional stationery package, with coordinating business cards, letterhead and envelopes.
- Create a company brochure. The goals of a brochure are to show that your company is stable, share the benefits of working with you, distinguish yourself from competitors, and create a distinct visual image.
- Tie in presentation tools. If you need presentation folders, proposal covers or a PowerPoint presentation, use the same images and messages found in your other marketing pieces.
- Launch or update your Web site. Communicate the same visual image and messages online as in print, with some adjustments. For example, people tend to scan rather than read Web pages, so keep text concise and make it easy for visitors to find the information they need and take action.



Trust in a professional

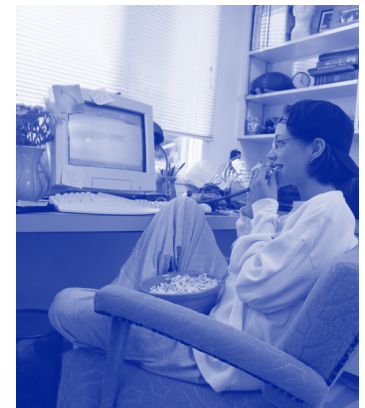
Marketing doesn't have to bust the budget, but you get what you pay for. Unless he's the next Warren Buffet, you wouldn't trust your 16-year-old nephew with your investment portfolio, so don't trust him with your marketing materials. Think of image building as an investment, and work with professionals.

For better or worse, we are bombarded with sales messages throughout our waking hours. One way to cut through the static is with marketing materials that distinguish your business and quickly communicate its best attributes.



Link to a better way to work

Suffering from neck or eye strain? Poor ergonomics may be the culprit. With a few adjustments, you can arrange your workstation for greater comfort. For example, adjust your keyboard to align the "B" with your belly button and take the stress off your neck. (Who knew?) For more information, check out www.healthycomputing.com.



"You now have to decide what 'image' you want for your brand. Image means personality. Products, like people, have personalities, and they can make or break them in the market place."

– David Ogilvy

Help end PowerPoint abuse

Are you a perpetrator of PowerPoint abuse?



If you're guilty of creating wordy slides, using distracting graphics, or adding distracting special effects just to satisfy your inner George Lucas, you have a problem. You're failing to make the most of a powerful communications tool, and it's interfering with your message. Follow this advice to use PowerPoint to communicate successfully.

Choose fonts wisely

Using too many fonts or illegible typefaces is a common trait of PowerPoint abusers. Ease eye strain with these helpful tips:

- Use a sans serif font to enable high visibility: Helvetica Bold Condensed and Franklin Gothic are good choices.
- Do not use script typefaces – they are hard to read and distracting.
- Limit the number of fonts used to no more than two per slide.
- Avoid italics with underlines, bold type with shadows, and outline fonts.
- WORDS IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS ARE HARD TO READ.

Conserve words

Wordy slides are bad for “information digestion,” so use words like a cook with chili peppers: sparingly. Text-heavy slides encourage viewers to read rather than listen to your ideas and prompt you to recite information, which dulls your speaking style. Only the core of the message should appear on the slide, so the audience has to rely on you for important information.

- Headlines should be no more than three or four words.
- Use bullet points, not sentences - only about six words per line.
- Try to limit any slide to no more than three or four bullets.

Go easy on the eyes

Many presenters cannot resist the temptation of using busy backgrounds, and too many colors. The simpler your layout, the better.

- Be sure the color of the text contrasts with the slides' background color. The best mix is a dark background with bright type.
- Avoid color combinations that may be difficult to look at or hard to distinguish: red/green, brown/green, blue/black, and blue/purple.

Follow this advice, and transform yourself into a PowerPoint pro. Oh, and don't forget to spell check.

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- Wear your name tag on the right side for a clear view of your name.
- Introduce yourself and offer an effective handshake – firm, but not bone crushing. Offer a business card, and ask the other person for one.
- Start the conversation with small talk. Your goal is to develop a personal relationship, and asking a few friendly questions will reveal common interests. (See *Small Talk 101* on page 2.)
- Don't stay too long in one place. Once you have exchanged cards and requested an opportunity to meet, excuse yourself and continue mingling.

Follow up

The event is over but your work is not done.

- Write notes on the backs of business cards you collect. Record anything you think may be useful in remembering each person.
- Be sure to follow up with those you've met, share information and offer to help in any way you can.
- Give referrals whenever possible.

You can't count on a gourmet meal at the next event, but if you follow this advice, you're sure to get better results from your networking efforts.

You can close more business in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you.

– Dale Carnegie