

Networking Tips -- Business Unusual

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It's been said that it's far easier to sell to an existing customer than trying to continuously acquire new customers and clients. I think there's a lot of truth in that. If for no other reason than the fact that whenever possible people most often choose to do business with those they know and trust.

The solution then is to become great at networking -- as I like to say "effective networking". Networking is not something you do to a person. Rather the effective networker leads off by looking for ways to serve people -- in doing this they understand that they're building value in the eyes of the person they eventually hope to become better acquainted with, and in turn become the person that person thinks of when they have a need for whatever product or service the "effective networker" happens to offer.

Since there's no shortage of people offering their products and services in the marketplace the person who understands and puts into practice effective networking skills better positions themselves as a trusted friend and dare I say, advisor.

How so you ask?

Consider the following scenario...

Let's say John from XYZ company has an appointment with the buyer of ABC company. John goes into the appointment with the attitude of selling his services to ABC company. Certainly nothing wrong with that -- except that our buyer at ABC company doesn't know John from Adam's house cat. He may even have a working relationship with someone from another

company already. That in itself puts John at a distinct disadvantage, doesn't it?

Now let's look at another example...

Dave from EDC company sets up an initial meeting with the same buyer at ABC company. Rather than jumping right into all the reasons he believes ABC company would do well to buy what his company offers -- he takes the time to probe the representative from ABC company about his challenges, and therefore, his needs.

During the conversation, and upon careful consideration it turns out that at this time what he has to offer doesn't really fit the needs of ABC company. Dave makes the choice to share this information with the person he is talking with at ABC company. I realize that you may have

very well cringed at what just happened in the example, but stick with me and see how this plays out. So Dave tells the person at ABC company that based on what he's telling him, while he doesn't have an exact match for what they are looking for, he may have someone who he can recommend that can help (this could be someone from Dave's network of contacts). He further explains that he would like to stay in touch and will refer the person he mentioned to ABC company.

Two things happened here. First, Dave has left the door open with the person at ABC company for future contact -- and at the same time he's likely built a lot of value in the eyes of the person he's just met with. How so you ask? Well, consider how you would feel if you met someone who genuinely had your best interests in mind -- even though it may not be a direct benefit for doing so -- that's exactly what Dave did in the example mentioned. Secondly, Dave can call up a person who is in his network who will be able to serve the person that he's just met with. This builds value in the person he gives the referral to, as well as the person from ABC company. Both are very likely to become sources of referral business for Dave going forward.

This is only one example of effective networking in action. Here's another approach to further illustrate the benefits.

Say for example Dave from EDC company knows he has an appointment with the representative from ABC company. Prior to the actual meeting Dave has done a bit of research via ABC company's web site, and by asking the person he plans to meet with what might be a good source of business for them.

At which point, Dave looks through his network (his contacts) and identifies people whom he already knows who might be a good contact for ABC company. Dave then makes a quick call to the people he knows from his network that he believes would benefit from connecting with ABC company and says he'll be meeting with ABC company and would they mind if he connected them at his meeting. To which in most cases he finds that not only are they open to the idea, but they are in fact delighted that he would be willing to do so.

Let's fast forward to the meeting with Dave and ABC company. Dave begins by saying he appreciates the opportunity to meet and mentions that before he gets into his discussion on his own products and services he would like to share some other potential sources of business with ABC company. Naturally this is not business as usual in the mind of our representative from ABC company. Here's a person that's not only focused on themselves, but actually focusing first on increasing ABC companies business.

Looking at the example above what comes to mind? If you were working for ABC company, would this be a person you would want to do business with? If at all humanly possible, wouldn't you find yourself more open to what Dave had to offer? I'm guessing the answer is a resounding yes.