

What's Your Networking Personality Style?

by Laura Orsini



Virtually anyone who's an entrepreneur does some sort of networking to build their business. If you've been at the networking game for a long time, but you're finding that no matter how many events you attend or people you meet, networking is just not working for you, it's probably you. That's right — it's probably you. You're not attending the **wrong** events, meeting people who **just don't need** your product or service, or simply having a run of bad luck. Those things could be a small part of the problem, but if, generally speaking, networking does not work for you, it's probably you.

That might be a tough pill to swallow — your networking isn't working because of something you are doing or not doing. It's OK. First, know you are not alone. For some individuals, meeting people is easy; for others of us, we'd rather have dental surgery than show up at another event, where we stand around with a drink in our hands looking for someone who looks the least bit friendly. Second, understand that you **can** learn to be a better networker. But in order to do that, it is imperative that right this minute you get out of that victim mentality that's been allowing you to believe (i.e., justify) that it's all someone else's fault.

There ARE things you can do to become a better networker. You have one of two choices: (1) you can master these skills, or (2) you can stay home and wonder why your colleagues are getting all the business.

What are the FIVE greatest keys to successful networking??

1. **SELECTIVITY** — Be selective about the events you attend. Hitting **every** event (also known as being a networking whore) is not necessarily the key to effective networking. Determine the kinds of people, business owners, or industries that would be a good match for your product or service, and find out where they meet, mix, and mingle.
2. **INTENTION** — Set an intention before every event. Visualize the outcome, and let it be people-oriented, as opposed to money- or business-oriented. And if you have any hesitation or resistance about the event - that is, if you don't want to go - stay home! People can feel your energy! There's nothing worse than feeling obligated to entertain the complaints of someone who's cranky because they attended an event they — and everyone else — would have been better off if they'd skipped.

Set an intention about the **kind** of networker you want to be remembered as.

We've all met a few people who could use to brush up on their networking etiquette. These are just a few of the networking styles you don't ever want to have used to describe you:

- **The Entertainer** — This person must be the center of attention at all times. They never enter a room unnoticed — when they arrive, they make sure *everyone* knows they have arrived. They talk at great length about themselves, their fascinating hobbies and pursuits, their thriving businesses, their globetrotting son, their Ph.D. daughter, their cute little dog, their powerful speedboat, their fabulous neighbors, their oh-so-well-run HOA of which they are the president, their upcoming African safari, their very important positions on various boards of directors, the speech they gave in Cannes last week, their burgeoning portfolio, their...
- **Grand Inquisitor** — This guy hammers others at events with rude, impertinent, or irrelevant questions. No probing is too personal, and he will turn any affront you may take at his boorishness back around on you. He has a commanding presence, but is unaware of the subtleties of interpersonal relationships. If this guy is in sales, he is King of the Hard Sell.
- **The Mystery Man** — This individual is not quite sure what he does, what he offers, or why he's in business. He's quiet, unobtrusive, and you will miss him completely unless you accidentally trip over him on your way back from the bar. He's the nicest guy, but no one ever gets to know how nice he is because he can't keep anyone interested long enough for them to learn anything about him. Sherlock Holmes would have a tough time figuring this guy out.
- **The Card Dealer** — We've all met this gal who throws her card at every person she meets, whether or not they are interested - usually before she even asks their name, *if* she ever gets around to asking at all. For this person, networking is just a numbers game. All she's got to do is get her card out there to 250 new people per week, and then sit back and wait for the phone to ring. "Damn - why isn't my phone ringing???"

On the other hand, there also are people who have such grace and finesse that we surely wish we could one day become nearly as skilled as they are at people-meeting. A few networking styles we can all aspire to:

- **The Hostess with the Mostest** — This outgoing person knows how to make even the most wilted wallflower feel welcome and important. She genuinely cares about people - she makes it a personal mission to see that everyone who attends an event has a good time - whether or not she's actually hosting the event. She knows how to give a sincere compliment that will make anyone feel instantly more confident and special.
- **The Storyteller** — This person can engage almost any crowd with their knowledge, charm, and wit. They always have an interesting story at the ready that, while entertaining, is never self-aggrandizing or simply for show. They have learned that telling a story that others can relate to will get and keep people's attention — and prompt them to ask more questions.
- **The UN Ambassador** — This person is a diplomatic wonder. They are very well-connected, and they use their seemingly encyclopedic knowledge about their friends', colleagues', and associates' businesses to continually introduce people to one another, building bridges between individuals who might never otherwise meet.

- **The Investigative Reporter** — This individual knows how to dig beneath the surface to get to really know people. They usually have more personal knowledge about others than their colleagues (e.g., birthdays, who's sick or just had a new baby, etc.), not because they're nosy, but because they're genuinely interested. They understand the truth in the truism that people do business with those they know, like, and trust. Their secret weapon is ICE.

I = investigate

C = celebrate

E = equilibrate, meaning we're all equal, so treat everyone — whether famous or simply members of the support team — equally. [Acronym courtesy of Adora Spencer, the Celebrity Connector.]

3. **CONNECTION** — You must have the willingness & ability to create a meaningful connection with others. Anyone who approaches networking simply as a numbers game (if I pass out and collect 50 cards; if I can generate a dozen warm leads; if I can schedule five appointments) is missing the point. Who attends networking events? People do! With whom do we do business? We do business with people. If and when you begin making your connections with people the focus of your networking, you will begin to see positive returns on your networking investments.
4. **CONSISTENCY** — Many novice networkers (and an unfortunate number of networking veterans) attend new networking events or try out new groups, never to return. Ask them why, and they say trite things like, “I didn't get any business.” “No one talked to me.” “It's a big clique - they don't like strangers.” And then they never go back again, and write that group or event off as another failed attempt. Networking successes don't happen in a box, and networking doesn't pay off instantly. It's about building relationships - and building relationships takes time, just like it takes time to grow a garden from seeds. Sow your seeds networking seeds well, and you will have a bountiful harvest. The fact is, it's not until you attend any event regularly enough that you are missed when you're not there that you actually know the people well enough for them to want to do business with you.
5. **FOLLOW UP** — Nothing, absolutely nothing, is likely to come of all your networking efforts if you don't follow up. Some people are stunning with their follow-up skills, while others of us shuffle the stacks of business cards we collect, thinking that someday we'll get to them. The best idea is to develop a *follow-up system*. Some sort of planned response effort that guarantees that you get back to the people you've met so that you can develop those chance meetings into relationships. As a rule, e-mail is good. A hand-written note is better. A phone call is even better still. But absolutely nothing beats an in-person meeting.

A Few Final Tips

Never assume someone can't help you, can't be of use to you, or isn't worth your time to get to know. You have no idea who your UPS driver's other clients are, who (s)he's married to, or who his/her neighbors are. Get to know the people first, so that you can develop a relationship. You'll be amazed at the results.

If you've screwed up — or if there's someone in your circle who has offended you in some way — be the bigger person air your differences. Isn't one uncomfortable conversation easier than ducking, hiding, and avoiding that person forever??

Remember, networking is not reserved for events that call themselves networking functions. Successful networking can and does take place ANYWHERE!!

LAURA ORSINI is a professional editor, writer, and marketing advisor with a BA in Nonfiction Writing from the University of Arizona. She is the author of several eBooks, including eBooks Made Easy, Niching Made Easy, Handwriting Analysis Made Easy, and 1,001 Real-Life Questions for Women. She also gives seminars on social media, eBooks, creativity, writing, gratitude and abundance, visualizing, and brainstorming. Contact her at: Laura@WriteMarketDesign.com or 602.518.5376.