

Why should I network when everybody already knows me?

Today, part two of building a robust personal network, **the how of effective networking**. In this episode of KONP's Business Bits, we'll talk about *how* to be an effective business networker.

Others generally don't take action because they're aware of something, others take action based on their preferences.

There are three elements of using networking to create preference:

1. Are you **engaging**? Do you draw others to you?
2. Are you **memorable**? Do you give others reason to remember you?
3. Are you **meaningful**? Do you bring information or resources meaningful to your potential network?

You gain these three attributes by using the seven secrets of effective networking. We'll discuss each in detail:

1. Your clear goal for your networking efforts
2. Your name tag
3. Your business card
4. Your tagline
5. Your elevator speech
6. Your opening questions
7. Your follow up tactics

Your clear goal for your networking efforts

We remember that the first step in reaching a business goal is to formulate an actionable vision of success. What do you want your personal business network to look like? What business goal do you wish to accomplish?

- **More customers**, through referrals
- **More business contacts** for internal needs
- **More community contacts** to improve your access to information

Once you've chosen your big picture goal, you need to refine your goal to make it actionable.

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Let's break that down using the goal of getting more customers

- You need a clear lead definition; who is the best fit to be a new customer for your business?
- If you could have all of the customers you want, how many would that be?
- What kind of customer growth do you need to get there?
- How will networking help you get the customer growth you want?

After you have formulated your networking goal, it's time to work on the three attributes of networking success, being engaging, memorable, and meaningful.

Your name tag

Your name tag is your personal billboard and **leads the way in making you engaging**. Your name tag tells everyone that you are present and ready to network. Why would you trust that important job to a handwritten sticker carrying someone else's branding?

I quickly discovered the engaging value of proclaiming my name and role with a branded, permanent name tag:

- Your name is presented, giving others the opportunity to address you by name, a great way to break the ice
- Your name tag gives others a conversational entry point, like "What is the SBDC?"
- Your name tag can offer additional messaging, and we will discuss in a moment

Your business card

Business cards are your anchor for being memorable. Whether you are looking for a job or running a business, giving out business cards is crucial to marketing your skills or services. Here are seven ways to be memorable with your business cards.

1. **Never leave home without them.** Any 'per chance' meeting is an opportunity to give out a business card. Make it a habit to carry business cards, always.

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2. **Insert a business card when sending invoices**, and with your payments, too. Developing this powerful networking attitude will keep you in the game.
3. **Ask others for a business card**. When given a business card, don't just take it and place it in your pocket. Make the person feel important by looking at their card for a few seconds. Write comments on the card for follow up.
4. **Be generous**. Give business cards out to everyone, including family and friends. Hoarding your business cards works against your goals.
5. **Ask for referrals**. When giving a business card, ask; "I would appreciate a referral, if you know anyone that could use my services." Give them two cards!
6. **Place yourself at the right place at the right time**. Like Todd said last week, every time people come together, networking is possible.
7. **Brand yourself with a tagline**. Put a tagline on your business cards and your name tag to enhance memorability.

Your tagline - it's not just for big corporations

An effective tagline conveys a promise of a benefit to your target market. **Your tagline helps you be memorable** by presenting a short statement of your value. **Taglines also help you be engaging**, as you are offering something about yourself. There is a tagline article attached to the show notes and here are some examples:

Show your commitment

We try harder

Explain product superiority

Takes a licking and keeps on ticking

Call to Action

Put a tiger in your tank

Create urgency

Later is now!

Your elevator speech

Time and time again, I find myself cringing when I overhear a great introduction wasted by poor preparation. "It's great to meet you, local entrepreneur, so tell me, what do you do?" Which brings an uncomfortable pause and the dreaded "Well..." Opportunity lost.

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Your elevator speech is an engaging, memorable way to tell others three important things:

- What you deliver; the benefits of your promise
- Who you do it for; your target market
- Why you are the best choice; why you are different

Forget the old "30 seconds" time standard; that was the 80s. As they say on YouTube, ain't nobody got time for that now!

I coach new entrepreneurs to pursue their vision of success while avoiding common startup mistakes. Seven seconds!!!

Again, there is an elevator speech article attached to the show notes, and there are many websites that will help you create both your elevator speech and tagline. AI to the rescue, ChatGPT can be your friend here!

Tips for reusing your tag line and elevator speech

- **Email signature**; A great way to provide value and context to first-time emails
- **Blog bio** - elevator speeches encourage reporters and readers to visit your website or social media channels for the bigger picture
- **Business cards**; People often use business cards to make notes on to help
- **Social media profile**; Take advantage of the exposure these channels offer and put an elevator speech in front of people viewing your profile

Your opening questions

This is how you can be the most popular person at any networking event, with no preparation and nothing but business cards. Asking someone about themselves is a powerful compliment. Simple open-ended questions are best.

- Ask each person in the event about their business or career
- Ask what went well so far this year

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- Ask could have gone better, what's holding them back, or something similar
- Thank them for their time, make a note and move on
- Repeat throughout the crowd

Your follow up tactics

As soon as possible after meeting your new network friends, set aside some time to send brief emails to those you met. Review the business cards you collected and check any notes you made. Start with a basic message and personalize each email with your notes from that contact. You also want to do follow up for yourself. Make some notes about how each event went and how many leads you acquired each time. Make your future plans based on your results

What if it doesn't go well?

Full disclosure; sometimes, it's just not a good experience. Maybe you inadvertently started with a "Debbie downer" who came in with a bad attitude. Sometimes the attendees just aren't good matches for your efforts. Maybe you are having an off day, yourself. Forget about it. It doesn't matter, because there will be new opportunities tomorrow.

To Wrap up

One of the most important factors of networking success is your body language. Be available!

1. Look sharp, be sharp
2. If a meal is served eat light and finish early so you can talk more
3. Have cards and questions ready
4. Introduce yourself with your elevator speech
5. Ask lots of questions
6. Close with your tag line
7. Follow up with contacts

A strong personal business network has proven time and time again to be **the best way** to enhance your reputation in the business community. You will open doors to opportunities you never knew existed.