



THE INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT



Share

Print-Friendly
NewsletterSearch
Back issues

CONTENTS

[Issue Notes from the Editor](#)

by Bill Ely

[From the Chairperson—And the Survey Said ...](#)

by Larry Stern

[The World of Social Media and Risk Management](#)

by J. Eddie Smith

[Successfully Build Your Business Network with "E-Blasts"](#)

by Aurélie Hiernaux

[Exit Planning for Actuarial Consultants: The Sooner You Begin, the Better!](#)

by Michael Oleksak

[A Compensation Overhaul for the Sales Development of the Entrepreneurial Actuary](#)

by Charles P. Preti

[New SOA Publication ... Buy the Book!](#)

ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTUARIES SECTION

[Entrepreneurial Actuaries
Section Leadership](#)



Successfully Build Your Business Network with "E-Blasts"

by Aurélie Hiernaux

During a business meeting, one common thing easily noticed is the plentiful exchange of business cards. It is, after all, a good way to keep in touch with other business people and build your own business network.

But this desirable scenario is not always the case. Here's one example: say you're a guest speaker at a business event. When your talk is done—even if you've done exceptionally well—your audience, including potential future clients, will not automatically contact you. If you have not taken the important step of getting your audience's business cards and then staying in touch with them regularly, you will have lost a grand opportunity to further build your business network.

In such a case, you must *not* simply throw whatever cards you bring back into a basket at your office and forget about them. You must add all e-mail addresses from your contacts to your e-mail list, perhaps putting them into Constant Contact or ACT or some other similar contact database.

Publishing expert Jia-Ling Loo put it this way in her article "Why Staying in Touch by E-Mail is Crucial to Publishing Success," which is published online, "Gathering new business cards at every possible opportunity can never be enough. It's what you DO with these new contacts that reaps rewards."

Business cards and e-mails however are not the endpoint for staying connected with other business people. A next step is crucial for achieving the same result on a long-term basis—sending e-blasts, i.e., e-mails sent all at once to your entire e-mail list. Though too many

[William Ely, Editor](#)

SOA Staff

[Meg Weber, Staff Partner](#)

[Jacque Kirkwood, Staff Editor](#)

[Sue Martz, Section Specialist](#)

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

[Entrepreneurial
Actuaries](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Resource Center](#)

[Member Benefits](#)

businesses ignore this practice, sending e–blasts of this kind offers several benefits:

- First, an e–blast can be in any kind of format you like.
- Second, an e–blast need not take too much of your valuable time (compared to an e–newsletter).
- Third, it's a way of communicating with your business contacts that can *systematize* such communications.

What's the goal and consequence of sending regular e–blasts? Simply that you end up generating word–of–mouth contacts within your business network. Business people tend to forget to keep reminding their connections about their fields of expertise and as a result, despite the simplicity of doing so via e–blasts, over time their connections forget too! This means colleagues, prospects, even clients talking about your good work, your great skills, your professional accomplishments and other word–of–mouth slows down to a halt.

As Loo summarized in her article, "It's really astonishing how few people (and companies) actually take the time to touch base with their newfound contacts, not to mention with past and present clients." Yes ... quite remarkable!

Nowadays, social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are all very popular and visible on the Internet as well. They too can be effective in terms of building one's business network and keeping you "top–of–mind." But it's also important not to rely solely on these vehicles since e–blasts to an e–mail list allow us to send e–blast messages to *all* our contacts, not just those subscribing to (or checking in with) Twitter, Facebook, etc. Everyone checks their regular e–mail at least a few times per day, though many may check for their social networking messages only sporadically.

To fine–tune this process, consider these tips for effective e–blast communication:

1. When sending an e–blast, make sure to include a button for forwarding your e–blast to recipients' friends and business contacts.
2. On your Web site, place a box in a prominent position so that visitors can easily sign up for your e–list.
3. Do not make people answer lots of information about themselves to get onto your e–list. Name, company name, telephone, e–mail and how did he/she hear about you may be enough. Keep things simple.

4. Always send a nice note to everyone before you officially add their names to your e-list. Say something like, "Great to meet you yesterday at the (business event). Let's put each other on our respective e-lists so we can officially stay in touch."
5. Never *purchase* an e-mail list. Every e-mail on your list should include someone you have actually met even if casually. E-lists work best when permission-based.

Finally, an e-blast must not be a mere self-promotional advertisement for your business, but a message of relevance and genuine value. Here are a few ideas:

1. Offer a short case study of a recent successful project including lessons for your recipients to observe.
2. Announce when you win an award or earn a new educational degree or professional certification.
3. Let your contacts know that you have just published a book or article, which are both fantastic ways to boost your credibility.
4. Offer your opinion of recent business events or business news.
5. Offer clients an "alert" about a change in a law, or a new government policy that might affect them.
6. Write a review of a relevant business book.
7. Create an e-newsletter. If you do this, be careful not to bog yourself down with too ambitious a format. Again, keep things simple!

Despite all I've written here, some people will still shrink from sending out blasts for fear of contributing to the daily flood of spam. Though this argument is understandable, if you translate it into lack of action, i.e., you *never* send e-blasts at all, you may be insuring your invisibility. Send out e-blasts only once a quarter or once a month, but do send them periodically throughout the year. This way, you will build a strong and successful business network that will raise your visibility above that of your competition and keep word-of-mouth about you favourable and ongoing.

Aurélie Hiernaux is a PR specialist at emerson consulting group inc. in Concord, Mass. She has authored several published articles in French and English. A graduate in PR studies at La Haute Ecole Libre de Bruxelles Ilya Prigogine, Hiernaux can be reached at aurelie@thoughtleading.com.

Actuaries
Risk is Opportunity.®

475 North Martingale Road, Suite 600, Schaumburg, Illinois 60173
Phone: 847.706.3500 Fax: 847.706.3599 www.soa.org