

Four Marketing Secrets to Make “Networking” a Thing of the Past

By Ken Lizotte

Beyond the usual marketing advice of putting up a website, printing out a stack of business cards and designing a lavish 4-color brochure lies a set of marketing techniques so little-used they can for all practical purposes be labeled “secret.” Those of us who regularly practice them reap such enormous benefits that we wonder how we could ever have tried to market ourselves any other way.

Here are four such “secrets” you are free to adopt with my blessing. You’ll be amazed how few of them will be likewise employed by your competitors:

- 1) **Stay connected.** Many negative connotations of networking are much deserved. When one’s aim at a professional gathering is to pass out scores of business cards to as many attendees as possible, then go on home, time spent doing so will be moments wasted. Instead, seek qualitative new connections and then devise ways to stay connected. First, send a “nice-to-meet-you” email the next day while putting your new friend on your e-list. Over time, staying connected allows a connection to fall into productive categories: an ally, a partner, a referral source or—gasp!—a new client!
- 2) **Use emails strategically.** As you plop your new connections onto your e-list, stay connected in ways that remind them what you’re all about. Send a monthly e-newsletter, or alert them of a new service, or let them know when you win an award or when you publish an article. If you don’t take such initiatives, your connections will easily forget you. Keep thinking up news about you to report to them so they will remember you.
- 3) **Publish articles.** One powerful marketing tool to stay connected is to write and publish articles, then make them available for free to those on your e-list. Published articles affords three big benefits: a) they help you flesh out and organize your ideas; b) they promote to the reader some core expertise or knowledge or message that displays why you are worth hiring; c) they elevate your professional credibility since a third-party entity has judged your ideas worthy of publication.
- 4) **Speak to targeted groups.** The impact of public speaking brings us full circle in that communicating your ideas to an audience of targeted individuals inevitably causes at least a few of them to want to know more about you and your ideas. Always tell your audience you would like to have their business cards so you can stay in touch. Something much appreciated by an audience is an offer to email them notes of your talk so that they can later review a full outline of what you have to say. Of course, you can then send everyone a “nice-to-meet-you” email the next day (see secret #1) and thus keep the whole loop humming.

If you heed these four secrets, you will mine marketing gold that will surely make a difference in advancing your sales and bottom line. Using this method, I sometimes field calls from prospects that had been on my e-list for years, admitting that not until recently did they have any need for my services. Because I had stayed connected with them, I was the only logical service provider for them to call. The selling process is then easier as well since such a pre-qualified prospect has typically come to know you, already sold on both your value proposition and your capacity to deliver it.

Try this method for the next few months and you'll never go "networking" again!

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