

WORKING THE NETWORK

Networking is the life blood of every business. Without customers no business can survive. Caitlín O'Connor, founder of Accelerating Performance offers her top tips to get you networking.

NETWORKING IS a key form of lead generation, one which has a measurable return on investment when deployed effectively and professionally. Very few other forms of marketing are as measurable, and for this reason several businesses build on networking as a sole lead generation strategy. It has been estimated that CEOs and senior managers spend 70 per cent of their time networking, while 65 per cent of all jobs are sourced through networking. "Most of us underestimate or take for granted the business of networking," says Gina Quinn, CEO of Dublin Chamber of Commerce. "It is an essential skill of professionals in all walks of life and a critical success factor in business."

Networking is all about personal marketing, and as marketing is a science it can be learned and perfected over time. Did you know that Richard Branson is not a born networker? He learned the skill with practice and perseverance.

Even the best networkers feel out of their comfort zone when networking. However, they learn to adapt. Some people suffer from 'networking syndrome' – they grab a glass of wine or refreshment and talk to the person nearest to them, be it a friend, colleague or competitor. They are not networking – this is socialising.

Introverts and extroverts both network with equal success. Both have different preferred networking styles. You will notice the introvert may talk for longer periods of time to a few people and develop great rapport and trust. On the other hand the extrovert may work the room and meet a lot more people. If these people were surveyed many months later you would find that both might have encountered similar success.

ABOUT CAITLÍN O'CONNOR

Caitlín O'Connor is founder of www.acceleratingperformance.ie and is widely acknowledged as one of



the leading experts in networking, lead generation and marketing. Caitlín has a passion for empowering people to take control and action through learning. Her programs are exhilarating, energy charged and results orientated. Accelerating Performance was founded in 2005 to stimulate growth through forward thinking. Caitlín has recently launched an e-learning CD ROM on effective networking accredited through the Institute of Professional Selling called Engage – Lead Generation through Networking. To find out more log onto: www.acceleratingperformance.ie.

Networking is a critical competency to everyone in business. The core lies in developing long term, mutually beneficial relationships of trust. Networking is not selling. Never launch into a 'sales pitch'; you are not at the event to sell – you are there to network. Just like developing trusting friendships networking relationships take time to develop and nurture.

Let me share a few tips with you that you can easily adopt to become an effective networker at your next Dublin Chamber event:

- Never sell.
- Remember it's all about the other person – show a genuine interest in others and how you can help them.
- Be a conversation starter and get good at small talk. By engaging in small talk we put our colleagues at ease.
- Listen attentively. We only learn by listening. We were given two ears and one mouth and therefore we should use our senses in this ratio. One of the biggest mistakes in networking is when individuals engage in 'verbal dumping'.
- Be positive. Engage in 'learned optimism'.
- Understand what you do and communicate it effectively. Don't make others read your mind.
- Exchange business cards and ask permission to follow up. Never give your card without first developing a relationship of trust and mutual understanding.
- Share contacts – Engage in the law of reciprocity; the more we give the more we gain.
- Follow up – One of the biggest failures that networkers have is in not following up effectively or not keeping in touch. Don't leave the contact up to the other person it is up to you.
- Get networking!

ENGAGE – LEAD GENERATION THROUGH NETWORKING

The Engage CD ROM and work-book learning programme has been developed to assist you to develop a methodology of lead generation through networking. On completion of the programme you will be a professional and effective networker. Being an expert networker will give your business a competitive advantage and ensure an increase in profitability.

Special Offer for Chamber Members: Enter the code 'Dublin chamber' to receive a special offer discount of €199.00. For more information e-mail: engage@acceleratingperformance.ie, or call (01) 902 3950.



lead generation through networking