

# If You Do a Good Job at This, No One Will Know ...

## *By John Wood*

Yesterday, I outlined nine great places to network and drum up freelance writing business.

Today, I'm going to talk about how to network effectively.

You might think that to be good at networking, you need the "gift of gab." However, it couldn't be further from the truth.

*All you really need is to be a good listener.*

Good networking is all about asking questions and getting the person you're networking with to talk about themselves.

Recently, I read professional speaker Bob Burg's book *Endless Referrals*. With the help of Burg's book, I've put together eight tips you can use at your next event to ensure you meet all your networking goals:

1.

**Take the initiative by introducing yourself** – When you get the chance, Burg says to identify and then introduce yourself to people whom he calls the "Center of Influence." These are people who are longstanding and active members of the community. And who in all likelihood know and can introduce you to people you will benefit from knowing.

2.

**Use Burg's "can't miss" networking questions** – Burg recommends using what he calls "feel good" questions. These are questions that are not "probing or sales oriented in any way." Because of this, they are perfect to use at a networking event where your goal should be *not to sell or talk about yourself*. In fact, when networking, your goals should be to learn about the *other* person. As we all know by now, people are most interested in themselves.

Here are Burg's ten questions:

- How did you get started in the widget business?
- What do you enjoy most about your profession?
- What separates you and your company from the competition?
- What advice would you give someone just starting out in the widget business?
- What one thing would you do with your business if you knew you could not fail?

- What significant changes have you seen take place in your profession over the years?
- What do you see as the coming trends in the widget business?
- Can you describe the strangest or funniest incident you've experienced in your business?
- What ways have you found to be the most effective for promoting your business?
- What one sentence would you like people to use in describing the way you do business?

3.

**The most important question you will ask at a networking event** – The whole key to networking is not to act like you're just there to find a buyer for what you sell. If you're too pushy or give a nonstop sales pitch, you'll quickly turn people off. The best way is to take an interest in and help other people. After you get to know someone a little bit, the one question to ask that Burg says "separates the pros from the amateurs" is:

*How can I know if someone I'm speaking to is a good prospect for you?*

This question immediately tells the person that you could be an important contact for them. Plus, it takes full advantage of the "Law of Reciprocity." Meaning, if you help someone else, they will want to return the favor.

4.

**Remember and use people's names** – It goes without saying that it's important to remember people's names. If you can't remember the person's name you are talking to, he or she will think you're not interested enough in them to make the effort.

A person's name is music to their ears. A networking technique Burg suggests after you meet someone is to go back to them later and use their name. You're bound to make a big impression on him or her. The other person may have forgotten your name already, but he or she will make a point of knowing who you are from that moment on.

5. **Introduce people you meet to each other** – By doing so, you start to become a "Center of Influence." After you introduce them, explain how they could possibly benefit each other. If you've asked them both the above "most important question you'll ever ask at a networking event," you'll be able to suggest to them how to identify people who are likely prospects for their services. Remember, it's all about giving. If you do it enough and sincerely, good things are bound to happen for you.

6. **Give people your business card** – The number one purpose of giving people your business card is not so they have *your* business card, but so you have theirs. Once you have their contact information, you can use it to refer business to them, send them articles that might interest them, and generally keep the relationship going.

7. **Give people your complete focus** – When you're talking to someone, give them your complete focus. Nothing will stop a relationship from flourishing quicker than if the other person gets the impression you're not really listening to them. Ignore what's going on around you and give whom you're talking to your complete attention.
8. **Think of networking as a fun adventure** – Attitude is everything in life, especially when you're in networking mode. If you look at networking as something you "have to do," you might as well stay home. Always think of it as an exciting and fun adventure, and you'll do just fine.

How will you know if you're doing a good job networking?

Burg writes in his book ...

*"If you are networking correctly, the other person will never notice you are networking."*

Great advice and something to strive for. Because as we all know, people don't like to be sold – they like to buy. And if you can come off as the solution to one of their problems in a non-salesy, consultative way, there's a good chance it will be an easy decision for them to hire you.

Do you have any networking tips you'd like to share or comments you'd like to make? If so, please post them here.

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## 2 Responses to "If You Do a Good Job at This, No One Will Know..."

Thanks for your contribution here. I would like you to know that I really enjoyed reading this article.

Another tip: try to mirror the behaviour of the person you are chatting up.

Use proper facial expressions, maintain eye contact, demonstrate open body language and monitor your tone of voice.

Nod frequently, but not to the point of distraction. You don't want to appear like a character from a comic strip.

Crack jokes. Sense of humour is contagious and puts your interlocutors at ease. Cheers.

*Archan Mehta* – over a year ago

Great article, John - thank you!

*Anne Michelsen* – over a year ago

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220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924