

Authentic Networking

Prequalify, prequalify; contact the organizer to find out who's attending to gain a competitive edge. Review the guest list to identify valued clients and/or high value leads you want to connect with at the event. Show up and present a "client branded experience."

- 1) **PREQUALIFY** for a ROI. (*prequalifying questionnaire below*).
- 2) Wear a professional name badge. (on right side) (first name only, title & company).
- 3) Dress for Success; create "*Lasting first impressions.*"
- 4) Connect with a firm handshake and make sincere eye contact. (sends a message of confidence, strength, and ability - "*I know what I'm doing!*").

- 5) Create a *mini Strategic Plan* -
 - a. Create a strategic networking plan. What are your goals for attending the event?
 - b. Write a natural and rehearsed authentic "30-60" Second Commercial that includes a benefit/value statement to get their attention, so you can connect after the event.
 - c. Smile, it breaks down barriers and puts people at ease.
 - d. Show you care about people; listen and ask open-ended questions.
 - e. *Be the "connector"* (Learn the professional etiquette method!).
 - f. Think—build bridges by finding common interests/threads that connect people. Who do they know that you know?
 - g. Create a "client branded experience."
 - i. Be fascinating—ask questions (kids, career, etc.).
 - ii. Unique—be authentic and stand out from the crowd, so people remember you.
 - h. Use humor—puts people at ease to release those endorphins; create positive energy.
 - i. Invite the person to connect with you after the event; LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google, handwritten thank you note and/or email.

- 6) **Networking Kit** - (keep in vehicle) (women - small leather bag with long strap for hands-free).
 - a) Be ready to speak your "30-60" Second Commercial. Your "30-60" should answer these questions: "So what?"—Why should I do business with you?
 - b) Prepare some questions to ask that show you care; stimulate a positive conversation; create ease; *build rapport*.
 - c) Business cards (If you don't have one, design and print cards with name, email, cell # & social media addresses).
 - d) Small notepad (3x5) and pen.(or write on the back of contact's biz card)
 - e) Credit card - beverage/parking.
 - f) Cell phones *off*; be fully present; don't take calls during an event.

- 7) "**Six Degrees of Separation**" - the hypothesis: anyone can be connected to any other person through a chain of acquaintances with no more than five intermediaries anywhere in the world

Sample Questions /Scripting for your networking event: You want to ask questions that focus on the person and show you care and put yourself at ease. Always refer to the person by name, however don't over repeat their name. Below are some sample questions (*No, don't ask every question, select a couple to initiate a conversation that will quickly and authentically build rapport and trust.*)

Start out with a few questions (closed-ended) that will get you a "yes" or "no." Then ask open-ended questions that begin with WHAT|WHY|HOW; encourage people to talk, feel valued, respected, and show you CARE.)

Keep your conversation relevant, exciting, and appropriate, DO NOT SPEW AND VOMIT "ME STUFF." *IT ISN'T ABOUT YOU!* Keep your conversation to 5-8 minutes to show respect; you're both there to make quality connections.)

Are you a member of the _____? (If yes, ask—

How long have you been a member?

Followed by—

Can you tell me why you joined _____?

_____ (name), what is the value for you being a member of _____?

Are you enjoying this event tonight/today?

Why did you decide to attend this event?

What do you like best about this event?

Why is that important to you? *or* I can understand (reframe/summarize what they've shared with you and add your own comments.)

May I have your business card, so I can remember you? (Don't offer your business card unless they ask for one)

(Stop, look at their business card and make a few comments about it before you put it away.)

So you're with _____ or own _____ and I can see you're located at _____.

DON'T LET THEM "SUPERGLUE" YOU; *get unstuck with this approach:*

_____, we're both here to connect with people tonight/today, so I want to be respectful of you to let you keep connecting with others. I'll email and/or call you in a couple of days because I'd like to learn more about you and your successful business (and to perhaps explore any collaborative opportunities). May I invite you to connect with me on LinkedIn, etc.? Thank you, I will send you an invitation. Please enjoy the event!

Prequalifying Organization/Networking Event Questionnaire

(Interview the Executive Director/ Membership Coordinator to determine if the organization/event members/guests fit your most ideal demographic/psychographic customer/client profile (target niche' markets) who need and want to buy your products and services.

- 1) Which industries does your organization represent? (Review the member demographic/psychographic information to evaluate for the industries that you serve with your products and services.)

- 2) May I review the member directory?
(Pre qualify and evaluate if the organization/event is the best networking opportunity for you to generate high-value leads. (Sometimes the organization won't give you access to the member directory (chambers of commerce you can access) until you become a member, however they should let you review the directory. Ask a colleague who's a member if you can access their on-line directory).

- 3) Which industries/categories are represented by your organization?
Review industry categories to make sure they match your profile/characteristics, (demographic/psychographic) high-value prospects/leads/customers who need and want your products and services solutions. Who's your competition?

- 4) What's your member retention rate %? (High turn-over?)

- 5) What's your organization's community perception of your brand promise, image, and reputation? (Are they a highly respected organization that offers its members value?)

- 6) On an average, how many new members join each month?

- 7) What is the most important reason for joining your organization?

- 8) If I become a member, which benefits and value can you offer to me? (events, tradeshows, educational seminars, advocacy, lending, etc.)(evaluate each event for the value it will add to your business)

- 9) What are your member annual dues/fees?

- 10) Is there an extra cost to attend events? What's the cost per event/month?

- 11) What's your average attendance per event?

- 12) Does your organization refer business leads to its members? If yes, what's your process?

- 13) Does your organization have a state/national affiliation? What is the value for your organization?

- 14) Which corporate sponsors support your organization? (Do these sponsors represent your industry target niche' markets?) WHY do they support you?

- 15) Are you looking for speakers? (Best way to serve and enhance your brand image, presence and awareness is to be a speaker.)

- 16) Who is currently serving on your board? (Evaluate board members based relationship and industries.)

- 17) Do you currently have board openings? (Serve on a committee and/or on a board; enhance your brand image and awareness. Make sure there isn't a conflict of interest or restriction for board members doing business with members.)
 - a) What's the application process to become a board member?
 - b) How do you prequalify and select board members?
 - c) Which skill sets are you currently looking for to complement your board?

Additional Questions to evaluate “Networking Groups”

(Le Tip, BNI, TeamLeads, uLink, Successful Thinkers, etc.)

- 1) Please tell me the history of your Networking Group!
- 2) Which categories of industries/products/services are you currently looking for to represent your networking group? Why?
- 3) Which geographic area(s) does your networking group represent?
- 4) What is the application process to become member?
- 5) How much networking is there at each event?
- 6) How do members support each other between meetings?
- 7) How many leads/referrals do your members generate per week/month?
(The number of leads are in direct relation to the member’s commitment and sales skill level.)
- 8) How do you track referrals and sales results?
- 9) What’s the conversion ratio % from lead/referral to sale? (You’ll find out what quality of leads are generated by the members)(Ask to see their records.)
- 10) How do your members follow up with each business lead to provide quality customer service?
- 11) Do you offer training workshops for your members? If so, which training workshops have you offered your members in the last year. (Offer to present a value-add training workshop.)
- 13) How do you decide which training workshops to offer your members?
- 15) Who teaches the workshops?