

Talking with (new) people

Professionals keep their networks fresh by regularly starting new relationships. One way to do this is to reach out to new people and talk with them. It's best to talk with the "right people", but it's more important to get started. If you start with someone, you'll eventually end up talking with the "right people."

Reaching out to meet people is an important part of two of the three basic strategies for starting relationships; it's part of both *contacting people you want to know* and *building a network of allies*. Meeting people is most productive when you have the frame of mind that:

"Everyone I meet can either become a client, an ally, someone who can help me serve my clients, or someone who might know someone I should know."

The best places to start are where it's easy to get access, the atmosphere is congenial, and where there are probably some people worth knowing. Such places include:

- **Industry events/groups for target industries.** Local chapters of industry associations in your target industries always welcome new members. You can attend events and talk with people, or can volunteer to take a bigger role. If you volunteer, you'll have to do some work, but you'll meet lots of people. If there isn't a local chapter near you, you can start one. Then you'll have a legitimate reason to talk with everyone in the industry in your area!!

There are also trade shows. If you live somewhere with a big trade show industry (e.g., Chicago, Las Vegas, New York, San Francisco), it's worth keeping track of who is coming to town. You can encounter lots of relevant people in just a day – usually for free – and make some connections.

- **Alumni associations** -- of your college, your professional school, or the places you've worked. People feel camaraderie even if they went to school 20 years before or after you, and you can make connections.
- **Professional events for your own industry** (e.g., Bar Association, Institute of Management Consultants). The people you meet at these venues can be allies for you, introducing you to people they know who need your services.
- **Skill-building events.** If you want to learn something or improve your skills, find a way to do it with others. Taking even a single class at a university gives you access to the whole institution, including of course your classmates.

- **Charity events/ fundraisers** -- if you support a cause, attend some of their events. Make a donation and meet some new people who have a shared interest.
- **Charity participation events** -- There are an increasing number of opportunities to actively do something with others for a charity, e.g., Habitat for Humanity, through groups like [HandsOnNetwork](#) (located in many cities). Spending a day working besides some strangers is a good way to get to know them.
- **Networking events** -- Helping people meet is the purpose. Given the current economy, you'll meet lots of people looking for work. But so what? That's an opportunity for you to try to help them now, and they'll remember you later.

What to talk about

Luckily, you have ready-made topics to start with – the event each of you is attending, and their reason and your reason for being there.

Then you can talk about (and listen about):

- What they are working on or excited about
- What you are excited about
- Your needs – what could someone do that's helpful to you. By the way, it's nice to let other people help you.
- And of course, what they need that you might be able to help with

Why most professionals don't do it

They are afraid. They don't want to be rejected. By being ruled by these fears, these professionals undercut and limit themselves. So admit it if you are afraid, and do it anyhow.

Something to try this week

Take a look at your schedule for the next few weeks. You may be very busy. Nonetheless, pick one event to attend, or investigate one organization and then pick an event to attend. Sign up, pay your fee if required.

Then pick another event for about two weeks later. You are trying to turn this into a habit.

Try to actually attend these events (rereading the Tips above just before you leave). You'll be pleasantly surprised by what happens.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.