

How to Find Business in Your Backyard!

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You may recall the “Acres of Diamonds” fable about the affluent Persian farmer who thought he could become even wealthier if he sold his farm and went looking for diamonds. He eventually died a pauper as he spent all his money traveling across Asia and Europe in search of the elusive diamonds.

One day, the man who had bought his farm saw something shiny in a pond as he was watering his camel. He was surprised and overjoyed to find it was a diamond. So all along, the first farmer had had diamonds on the farm ... he just wasn't looking in the right places.

The moral is that there are many gems of business in your backyard, as well. Do you know where to look and do you have the right people in your network to help you uncover them? Or, do you spend valuable time and resources looking for your diamonds in other states and countries? If you prefer the latter, read no further. If, however, you would like to spend more time with your family and friends, sleep in your own bed more of the time and spend less time in airports - read on.

How to uncover your diamonds

- Create a personal marketing/relationship-building plan ... in writing!
 - Who is your target market?
 - Where are you most likely to meet them or people who can introduce you to them?
 - Have you positioned your company as a leader in its market?
 - What niche have you carved out in your field?
 - What value do you add?
 - Why would someone want to do business with you?
 - What companies locally are comparable with those who hire you “afar?”

- Swing into action.
 - Join the “right” organizations derived from answers to the above questions. Research and attend your top choices before you make a commitment.
 - Do you feel comfortable/did members welcome you?
 - Do you agree with the ideology?
 - Do you like the mix of people?
 - Are the meeting times convenient?
 - Join fewer rather than more ... and get involved! Weigh the time you spend on committee work vs. the time you sit waiting in the airport. Compare the time spent at a dinner meeting with that of having dinner alone in your hotel room. Which is more likely to yield the results you want?

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- Within the organization, weigh which events will most likely connect you with your potential customers or those who will refer you. Experiment until you find the right fit. Constantly evaluate your choices as your business changes.
 - Donate time at your church, synagogue, mosque, school and favorite charity ... with a positive attitude. Keep in mind that many of the people you meet are in business or know people who are ... and you are constantly making an impression.
 - Get into print. Write articles or columns for your homeowners' association, religious organization, your company newsletter, local or regional newspapers, industry and special interest publications. People need to see your name in print six times before they remember you or believe your business is for real. And, not everyone reads every issue of every publication in which you might appear!
 - Present programs at your library, park district, civic, social, professional or business association. Show others you are a knowledgeable person in your field ... and a good communicator!
- **Build a network**
 - Give, give, give. Trying to take without giving is like trying to make a withdrawal before you make a deposit. It doesn't work with financial institutions, and it doesn't work in life either.
 - Form alliances with people who have synergistic products/services.
 - Refer people whom you trust whether they have given you a lead or not.
 - Conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times.
 - Honor your network and treat them and their privacy with the utmost respect.

May your portfolio soon be a-glitter with the diamonds you have uncovered your backyard!

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Lillian D. Bjorseth coaches people in business development skills so they achieve their desired networking results. Based in Lisle IL, she's a people-skills speaker, trainer and author of *Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last; 52 Ways to Break the Ice & Target Your Market*; and the *Nothing Happens Until We Communicate* CD and workbook series. She's a contributing author to *Masters of Networking*. You can reach her at lillianspeaks@duoforce.com, www.duoforce.com or 630-983-5308.

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