

Networking Works When You Know How

by Lillian D. Bjorseth, president
Duoforce Enterprises, Inc.

1. "I'm going to make sure everyone in the room has my card."
2. "I have a great elevator speech for when I meet people."
3. "I'll *try* to follow up."

No, no and no. We'll look at why shortly.

Word-of-mouth, unequivocally, is the number one marketing tool and the easiest way to grow your business and get a job. Nothing compares with the phone call that starts, "You were referred by ..." and goes on to share how the person is seeking someone with your services/products or your talents for a job opening.

I know of only two ways to get word-of-mouth referrals. One is to meet people who need your products or services or have a job opening and/or will tell potential customers and employers about you. The other is to use the media such as an article or online article to establish you as a subject matter expert. Positioning yourself through publicity is a proven way to begin building *trust* in people who do not *know* you.

Let's examine the first method: networking is the number one way to meet people and start the referral process. Unfortunately, the word has become trivialized through overuse and misuse. As with other avenues of marketing, there's the right way and the "other" way. So many people complain about networking not working yet they have never taken the time to learn the basics, far less the more sophisticated nuances.

Here's why I said "no" to the above statements.

1. **Networking can be a game of numbers;** however, it is far more important to be concerned with quality and etiquette. If you want someone to have your card, always ask for theirs first. If, in turn, the person doesn't ask for your card ... don't give it. Actions speak louder than words. This also goes a long way toward dispelling the myth of the successful networker being the person with an out-stretched arm whose hand is full of business cards.
2. **The well-known "elevator" speech is usually 30-60 seconds** and far too long and impolite for you to recite when you meet someone. Instead, create a dynamic Verbal Business Card, which in one or two sentences encapsulates *what* you do, not *who* you are or *how* you do it. It needs to use active verbs and be full of benefits (not features) so others immediately know what's in it for them.

Unless you work for a well-known company, don't include it in those precious first moments. It's not what will "sell" others on speaking with you. In fact, it may cause their mind to wander as, for instance, they try to figure out what Duoforce Enterprises is ... and why "Duo?" ... does it mean two of something? (It does! However, that's not what I want you to concentrate on when you meet me.) Also, leave out titles or labels like bank vice president or accountant, attorney, trainer, consultant. Be leery of including adjectives and adverbs that loftily describe you.

Save that elevator speech for when someone asks you "How do you do that?" which is the question every good Verbal Business Card engenders.

Lillian D. Bjorseth
2221 Ridgewood Rd.
Lisle, IL 60532

630-983-5308
630-983-5312 (fax)

www.duoforce.com
lillian@duoforce.com

3. **You must follow up, not try to.** It's one of the quickest ways to set you apart positively. So few people do what they promise at a networking event. Initiate an e-mail, phone call, meeting or send a relevant article or the referral you promised.

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Lillian helps people build high-value relationships by honing their business development, business networking and communication skills. She's a professional speaker, trainer, skills coach 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/workbook series. She's a contributing author to *Masters of Networking*. Contact Lillian at 630-983-5308, lillianspeaks@duoforce.com or www.duoforce.com.

Lillian D. Bjorseth
2221 Ridgewood Rd.
Lisle, IL 60532

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