

Networking still the key to success

By Jan Wilmoth

Lisle Sun

May 15, 2009

When I look back over my working life, every job I've loved I got through someone I knew. Whether it was my job at United Parcel Service as the company's first female customer service representative, my first article published in 1980 in the Lisle Advertiser when I lived in England or my job at Fire Chief magazine, each started with an introduction through friends.

At a recent conference about designing fire stations, one of the goals was to encourage networking among the attendees. Through the exchange of ideas and sharing lessons learned, people find out they don't have to reinvent the wheel. We encouraged networking with long breaks and by making an effort to constantly introduce people who have common interests or problems.

Lisle-resident Lillian Bjorseth is also a believer in business connections. In 1996, she wrote the book, "Breakthrough Networking." A third edition was recently published.

» [Click to enlarge image](#)



Lillian Bjorseth

Bjorseth's book focuses on how to improve networking and communication skills. It suggests how to prepare to network before an event, how to work the event and then how to follow-up for the maximum results.

"Seeing the whites of someone's eyes is still the surest way to build the foundation of all good relationships," she said.

Bjorseth's background includes working at AT&T, Bell Labs and Nicor Gas in the Lisle/Naperville area. In 1990, she turned down the opportunity to move to the West Coast and, instead, started Duoforce Enterprises Inc. to help people develop professionally and personally through better communication and networking.

As a professional speaker, Bjorseth trains corporate industry employees on how to improve their communication skills, as well as improve presentation skills and networking relationships. She has addressed the National Association of Realtors three times.

The increase of online communication has taken a serious toll on face-to-face communication, according to Bjorseth. Consequently, the loss of personal communication can not only take a toll on relationships, but on networking opportunities as well.

"Everything I'm reading says that the way to get a job is to get out and network," said Bjorseth. "On the computer you miss the body language. You don't get any of that electronically."

In 2003, Bjorseth co-founded The Greater Networking Extravaganza, held annually in Chicago. The event, held last month, offered attendees the opportunity to learn how to grow their network and networking skills. The program included a presentation to the attendees, followed by open networking, structured networking and the sharing of contact information.

"We end with open networking again and encourage people to follow up with one another," said Bjorseth. "We really get a potpourri of people. We don't have membership. We attract people from different sources -- through the LinkedIn networking Web site, different business groups, media and people telling people," she said.

Even a town the size of Lisle offers a host of networking opportunities. Besides the Lisle Chamber of Commerce, there are smaller groups for Lisle women in business and young business professionals. The Lisle Lions and Lisle Rotary provide more opportunities to network and offer volunteer services to the community.

Everyone networks. Whether it's trying to find a good plumber or baby-sitter, a new job or a great place to buy steaks, it's all about connecting with people you trust and are willing to help by sharing information.

Janet Wilmoth was raised in Lisle. She lived in five countries in 15 years and in Hinsdale for 10. She moved back to Lisle in 1998 and plans to stay