

Networking and meeting new people expands your opportunities. The more people who know what you do, the more chances for business to be sent your way. Finding ways to network can be as simple as joining a networking group through your local Chamber or other networking circle. You need to find these opportunities. This marketing idea gives you an example of how one person chose to create networking opportunities. There are many ways to make it happen...maybe host a meet and greet at the local brewery or pub, host a fundraiser for the local school (gear it to allow people to participate in something so you can meet them), or put together a Home Expo for your community with all the local realtors, home improvement companies and those that would benefit homeowners to be in touch with! Be creative! But, get out there and network!

Networking in a Nutshell: Create Million \$\$ Connections

Christine Clifford Beckwith, CSP

Standing in line at a Kinko's Print Shop one Sunday afternoon, I couldn't help but glance at the paperwork of a man ahead of me. "Midwest Society of Association Executives Annual Convention."

"Excuse me, sir," I started, "I noticed your credentials. I'm a Professional Speaker on Sales and Marketing. Does your organization use outside speakers for their Convention?"

Before leaving Kinko's, I had the name and number of his organization's Executive Director. By Monday, I had telephoned. Five months later, I was delivering their keynote address.

Luck? Timing? It's networking, a key to your success in mortgage banking, too.

Whether you are trying to locate the busiest realtor in town or looking for new prospects, networking works. How do you do it? There are two ways- each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

From The Bottom Up

Sometimes it seems impossible to contact an executive or expert in mortgage banking because they are so busy. Should you give up? Not at all. Rather, start lower on the totem pole.

When I began concentrating on speaking full-time, one of my first priorities was to meet Harvey Mackay, author of *Swim with the Sharks Before You Get Eaten Alive* and *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*. He was successful, well connected, knowledgeable, and local. But would he take my call? No.

I asked my friends who knew Harvey to call or write on my behalf. Through those contacts, I made an appointment to meet Harvey's assistant. The assistant and I hit it off and learned we shared several things in common. Before my friends were finished making phone calls, I also had an appointment for breakfast with the President of Harvey's firm.

Networking through Harvey's web of professional and personal relationships landed me my appointment with Harvey and several other meetings since. It never hurts to know the receptionist, secretaries, and administrative personnel who, once they know you by name, can hand you the key to the head office.

The disadvantages? It takes longer and may require several appointments until you reach your targeted goal.

From the Top Down

Have you ever looked across a crowded room only to spot one of your idols or the realtor you've heard so much about, surrounded by a mob of eager individuals? This recalls the moment in *American Beauty* when the sight of their city's star Realtor played by Peter Gallagher, transfixed Annette Benning's character's eyes. "If only I could have ten minutes with them," you think as you stare wistfully, just as Annette did.

In advance, find a field of common ground, preferably through someone who knows that person. Study that person. Then muster your courage and approach them with a statement like, "Mr. Smith, my name is Christine Clifford Beckwith, and my friend Linda Johnson promised me that if I could have five minutes of your time, you would find my work of great interest to you and your agency."

The worst thing that could happen is that they say "NO". Your ego may be bruised; you may feel a twinge of rejection, but you tried.

The best thing, however, is that the person probably *will* give you five, ten, or even twenty minutes (experts are surprisingly eager to talk). Next time you're at a mortgage banking event or forum of interest to you, introduce yourself to the experts. Relationships with them can open million-dollar doors.

Now the Midwest Society of Association Executives Convention had long been over, but I knew not to let an opportunity slip by. I asked their Executive Director for a letter of recommendation and a list of the other 49 state's Executive Directors, and his permission to use his name in a query letter to those Directors.

The result? I've spoken at three or four State Association Conventions every year since. So next time you're standing in line at the print shop-or anywhere else- look around. Hobnob.

Cost: Your time

Cristine Clifford Beckwith, CSP is an industry top leader and the author of six bestselling books including *You, Inc.- The Art of Selling Yourself and Inspiring Breakthrough Secrets to live Your Dreams. Don't Forget to Ask!*