



Mental Mindsets for Success

Fearless Networking

For many entrepreneurs, their least favourite business activity is networking. Walking into a room of strangers with a sweaty palm and a fistful of business cards is outranked only by public speaking as the most stress-inducing business activity. Since its launch in 2009, my most frequently requested workshop for entrepreneurs is Fearless Networking: Less Fear – More Business. After facilitating this workshop for thousands of people over the past decade, I am pleased to share a few tried-and-true tactics for reducing your stress and resistance to business networking.

The #1 issue:

The most significant barrier to effective networking is our mindset. When we think of entering a room of strangers to ask for business, most people have a deep physical sensation of discomfort. That discomfort is rooted in feelings of embarrassment, vulnerability, and rejection. We feel uncomfortable selling ourselves and our products or services. The very idea creates an experience of inauthenticity and an imbalance of power between us and others. It is as if we were saying, “I am stepping into the room to sell to others. I need something from you, and you have the ability to reject or accept me (and my business offering).”

We can change our thinking about the networking experience by moving from a sales mentality to an awareness campaign mentality. Networking is simply an opportunity for more people to know about you and your business offering. People cannot buy your product or refer your services if they do not know that you exist. It is as simple as that. Networking can be a numbers game, and

the more people you meet, the greater the chance to create your business “awareness campaign.” Networking doesn’t always lead to immediate business growth, so it is important to engage in regular networking opportunities. Any business owner who has networked over time has stories of business connections and new clients.

The Three Keys to Creating Your Awareness Campaign

Proceed with curiosity

Get curious about the people in the room. When you focus on the whole experience of networking, rather than worrying about your presence in the room, you will be more approachable and available to meet more people. Find out what people are looking for in their business and genuinely offer connections or referrals. For instance, someone might be looking for new office furniture and you know someone who has office furniture for sale. Ask for and offer to provide referrals for networkers. Entrepreneurship can be a lonely experience, so offer to introduce people who need to know each other in your business network, and ask for referrals yourself.

Be prepared to share

Try out your introduction or elevator pitch on a few family members or friends. Ask them to provide typical questions about your business. This list of FAQs (frequently asked questions) will help you prepare to network. We can be so focused on getting our introduction perfect that we forget people will be genuinely interested and have questions about our business.

Become a connector

Make a plan before you head out to network. Set a goal for how many people you will talk with and/or how many new people you plan to meet. It can sound a bit corny but it works. There’s nothing like a plan to make things happen. This will allow your mind to focus on the commitment you have made to yourself and your business before you even leave home. Plan follow-up coffee meetings to learn more about the business offerings of others. Keep these meetings on a time limit and keep your commitments when you set them. Before you know it, you will be connecting and networking like a pro!



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