

# **Art of Relationship Management and Market Research**

*By: Cindy Freelander*

## **Networking is:**

- Career management or a life management skill
- We all get a lot from engaging with other people
- A resource directory--the first place you go, like a friend
- Critical part of work and personal life

**Networking is NOT** telling folks what to do. Most people do it poorly, even coaches.

## **Goals:**

- Fun
- Informative (tools and techniques)
- Get group to do it

**Communication:** Adapt networking to your own style--make it authentic, not mechanical or plastic. It's all about marketing--you are a product, so think about branding.

## **To get someone to help you with networking:**

- Say your name (some folks in 60 seconds of fame forgot to)
- Don't use "trying" when you want someone to hear your message (as in "I'm trying to get into a new field." If you aren't convinced, how can someone else be?)
- People don't like networking because they feel like you're asking for help or you want me to fix it.
- You don't want to feel needy, so try thinking "I want to let you know how smart I think you are so you'll want to help me make an important decision."
- "Pick your brain" sounds like a vulture. It's not a good graphic expression "want to take something from you" avoid "I need" Instead try: "I want to brainstorm with you." It's two-way, exciting and show's you bring something to the table.
- Go to people who have more than you do. But don't be needy or ask them to fix something
- A scenario to avoid: "Do you know of any work for me?" They'll ask for your resume, send it to HR, and you'll feel like you made progress, but not really. Instead try: "Last time we spoke, you gave me a list of resources, are there any other people you can recommend I speak with?"
- Find real reasons to talk to people. The goal is to build relationships, not to get work. Getting work is just a by-product.
- Cindy used an example of an obscure profession: trapeze artist. Keep asking. Someone will know somebody who will know somebody who is a trapeze artist.

### **Networking is:**

- Building relationships
- Building rapport
- Sharing info
- Spreading a net
- Extending the connection
- Expanding the path beyond Advice:
  - bring info to gain info
  - ask open ended questions.

### **Practice avoiding close-ended questions.**

- Not: "can you?" It's closed--it can be answered yes or no.
- Use helping verbs: How, why, tell me about, describe.
- Not: "Do you know anyone else I can talk to?"
  - Instead: "Who else can I talk to?" People start thinking
- Not: "Do you have any questions?"
  - Instead: "What questions do you have?" Then wait for them to answer!
- Ask for a meeting:
  - We say we can't ask people for time, so we want to do things over the phone. We need to get over the discomfort.
  - Put something on the table: Be prepared for meeting--it gives them a framework
  - Ask for specific people you'd like to speak with
    - Even better prepared: show a list of folks you'd like to talk to.
- Ask: "Who else would you put on this list?"
  - The List helps to trigger discussion. Plus we can only remember 7 +/- 2 things, but can look at more things on a list.

### **Relationship management and market research--that's what networking is.**

- Companies wouldn't put products in the marketplace without research.
- Demonstrate that you've done your homework.
- Tailor your approach for each meeting.
- Make sure you fix all generic references in letters and e-mails.

### **Go about this assuming:**

1. You don't need money
2. You have productivity in your life

### **Do what you love, the money will follow.**

- Find your passion, like chocolate that you can't walk by without eating.
- Find something you can't stop talking about, you engage people with, you're excited about.

**Of course, don't tell people you're not looking for a job:**

- Find legitimate and passionate reasons to meet with people
- Sincerity, enthusiasm and confidence work
- Self-doubt is a very natural thing--watch being desperate or needy or losing your confidence.

This job market is like musical chairs. Because the chairs are missing, there are some real needs. What you have to do is find innovative ways to fill the needs. After 9/11, people realize they need to have fun, and have a deeper commitment to work/life balance. Think about helping with a service business.

Everyone has risk-taking ability and creativity. Just find the scale that works for you.

Compassion and understanding seems to work in this market. Don't forget we're in this together.

**When listening, try to listen from the other person's point of view.**

- Acknowledge sincerely and specifically for that individual.
- People want to be heard.
- People acquire work through relationship management--you never know when a job offer will come through.

**Some facts:**

- 75-80% of jobs are hidden
- 20-25% of jobs are public
- 75-80% of competition is going after those 20-25% public jobs

Create a target list of people hire for the jobs you want. Someone you know knows these people. There are lots of ways to get access to people:

- Write an article and interview them
- Join an association
- Do a survey and promise to get back to them with the results
- Go to and/or speak at conferences and seminars
- Make e-mail brief (this works better with an introduction or reference from someone else which goes in the subject line)
- Manage communications carefully, especially watch e-mail at high levels
- Explain what you want and how you'll get back to them.
- Unless it's an open position, don't send your resume--it just gets forwarded to HR
- Use your connections--make them happen.
- Use introductions: contact the person directly and say who sent you.
- Instead of "so & so suggested I call" try "Tom told me what you've been doing..." or "Tom and I agreed you would be a wonderful person to talk to about..."
- Make sure the person giving the intro actually knows your target.
- Flattery works. Try "may I use your name?"

- You don't have to take people to lunch. Sometimes a business setting is actually better for a targeted discussion.
- Internet forums or discussion groups are a great place to establish expertise and relationships. Top people often show up and can lead to networking. These are a great resource base.
- Join a 5 o'clock club or other networking group.

**Your personal marketing plan:**

- Is it a job interview or networking meeting?
  - Know which one you're in and act accordingly
- Start with a product definition
  - key success stories
  - areas of expertise
  - have examples and stories ready
  - bring brochures, product information, whatever helps to illustrate your strengths including selling points, mission statements
- Make strong statements about yourself
- Get a coach or someone to help you.
  - They ask transformative questions to help you change who you are into what you want to be.
- Get someone to critique you on the language you use to ensure that you are understood.