

Converting Connections into Business

How to turn business contacts and relationships into cashflow!

By Jen Harwood



How do you convert casual conversations with total strangers into new business? Whether you are a dexterous communicator, or pretty reticent when it comes to striking up conversations at business events, any successful business owner knows that that every conversation about business could be an underlying opportunity! Let's take a look at the five types of people you may meet at a networking event and decipher how to connect, build credibility and convert those conversations into business.

They key types of people you are likely to find are:

Leads

People who are in your target market. They fit your ideal customer profile and in conversation you will immediately connect them with your product or service. To convert the conversation you could say, "I think I can help you with that. Would you like to talk further now or make a time for us to meet?" If they want more conversation, have it and ask for their business card. If not, try to make an appointment on the spot. The desired outcome of meeting leads at networking events is to build credibility and then convert business opportunities.

Contacts

People who you already know, although they may not remember what you offer. You

can build credibility by sharing results from other clients and demonstrating your expertise in your field. As you know them, your interest and questioning will be more relaxed. With contacts you can launch straight into a 'conversion conversation'. For example... "So Dave, when are you going to let me re-finance your home?"

Referrers

People who want to recommend you to their network. These people build their own credibility by recommending you. They tend to watch you, to see if you are consistent with your words, actions and results. Once they approve you and your product/service they ask for your card and then distribute your details to their network. A referrer is a valuable asset and your goal is to have many. Keep them up to date with the results of the introductions they make. Let them know you are serving their network and thank them often.

Promoters

People who appreciate you and what you offer. Sometimes these people are called raving FANS. They are your unpaid marketing and PR team. When you meet a promoter, you'll know. They get excited about what you do/offer and then will talk you up and generally create a positive impression of you. The key is to make sure the message they give out is correct. You must speak clearly and confidently as they will take your message

and broadcast it to everyone. Also remember promoters like to promote. Share your results with them (with permission from your clients), as they are likely to promote your results as well.

Extras

It's hard to remember this group of people, as the first four sound so promising for creating business! They are often not recognised by you as you are focusing on your stars - leads, contacts, referrers and promoters. The Extras...wives standing next to their husband (or vice versa), a young person hanging about, an associate waiting for her boss to finish a conversation, a smart 10 year-old who asks too many questions, a shy person or even a person who is inappropriately dressed. These people are often the KEY to your success. The Extras watch and listen to everything. They are the people who influence and reinforce. Look for, speak to and connect with them. Know that they will listen for the best interest of the STAR and if they are satisfied and choose to trust you, they will playback your key points

later highlighting your benefits. After an event, follow up with all the people you collected a business card from. You can call, email or link with them online through tools such as www.linkedin.com. The follow up is most important as most people forget what they heard. So when they are back at work, the problem they have still needs to be addressed and when you make contact, they will be open and respond.

One last thing, if you forgot to follow up a few people after an event, don't worry. The length of time is not an issue if you call or email them and say... "I met you at xxx event some time ago and I've been meaning to contact you. I'm contacting you now to ask you xxx or invite you out for a coffee to talk about xxx. Would you be interested?" In my experience most people are fine with this approach. All you have to do is remember to make the connection, build your credibility, meet with them and then convert ideas and opportunities into business. If you stick to that order, you will have great success. ■

Jen Harwood is a results-orientated business educator, international speaker and business author who helps people think, focus and take action. Her national business awards and recognition as a speaker have placed her at the top of her profession. Jen was acknowledged by being an international Judge for the Middle Eastern Business Excellence Awards in Dubai 2007 and 2008. You can contact her at jen@jenharwood.com or for more information visit: www.jenharwood.com

