



BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS BASICS

Small business owners and managers are constantly looking for methods to increase profits and grow their customer base. Promotions, products, and services are only a few of the ways to entice clients and customers to return. In order for a business to be successful, it is important to figure out what is necessary to achieve this goal. Not only does it involve hard work in the office, but it also involves networking on a regular basis.

The principle of networking is to develop mutually beneficial relationships that will increase business. Associating with other people and companies that have common interests provides opportunities to build professional contacts and business-to-business prospects. By widening circles of acquaintances and contacts, a person increases chances for advancement and success. Polls estimate that the average person knows about 250 people. And, each of those people knows another 250 or so people. This could mean that with each new person met an access to a potential pool of 62,500 people (with just 2 degrees of separation) is created.

No time for networking? Not comfortable standing in a room full of strangers? Well, networking is constant and can be easy and natural. Most of what owners and managers do throughout the day creates opportunities to develop and maintain business-to-business relationships anyway. However, it may be necessary to put a little more consideration, effort, and focus into the value of the day-to-day activities and how effective they can be.

Network for clients and business associates; introduce clients to others who could be an appropriate resource. Further, invite your clients to network with you.

Invite or suggest clients and associates to attend professional events such as workshops or seminars.

Ask for opinions; people like to offer feedback and it makes them feel engaged and valued.

Communicate on a personal level and be genuine. Also, be accessible and follow up with people.

Volunteer. Nothing builds stronger relationships than when people work together toward a common goal that is greater than the individual's goals.

Follow up on referrals, introductions and leads, but respect people's boundaries.

Thank clients, customers, and associates for their business and referrals and do not take leads for granted. Thanking people helps solidify a respectful relationship and acknowledges that their efforts on your behalf are appreciated.

Paying attention and enhancing normal interactions with affiliations and prospects helps build strong relationships that last and will lead to more business, more referrals, and more profit. Networking and relationship opportunities are everywhere from in person to on-line affiliations. Participate in activities that feel comfortable so that committing will be effortless.

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