

Book The 29% Solution

52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies

Ivan R. Misner and Michelle R. Donovan
Greenleaf Book Group, 2008
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Recommendation

How can you develop new clients and new business? The four most time-tested techniques are “cold calls, advertising, public relations and networking.” Cold calls are more enjoyable than sticking yourself with red-hot needles – but not much. Advertising costs big bucks. Public relations can backfire if you don’t know exactly what you are doing. That leaves networking. Networking is not demeaning like cold calls. In fact, it can be fun. It doesn’t cost an arm and leg like advertising. And you won’t inadvertently end up in some crusading reporter’s crosshairs. Ivan R. Misner and Michelle R. Donovan’s book teaches you the best networking techniques. They explain, “It’s not net-sit or net-eat. It’s net-work.” You must “work the networking process.” *BooksInShort* thinks this savvy book does a good job of showing you how.

Take-Aways

- A popular myth says everyone is connected to everyone else by “six degrees of separation.”
- This is not true. Only 29% of people are that well connected.
- However, if you know how to network, you can join that 29%.
- The benefit? You can substantially increase your business through networking.
- Plan your networking with the same attention you devote to other marketing activities, such as advertising, public relations and direct mail.
- Spend seven hours a week strictly on networking activities.
- Treat your network contacts list as your most valuable database. Update it regularly.
- The master networker’s basic ethic is, “Givers gain.” Go out of your way to do things for others and they will do the same for you.
- Great networkers always immediately follow up on referrals.
- The most effective networkers use a consistent, planned methodology.

Summary

“Six Degrees of Separation”

Don’t believe the hype: Most people are not connected with everyone else by the famous “six degrees of separation.” Actually, only about 29% of people are hooked up that tightly. These expert networkers know how to develop and enhance beneficial connections. If you want to join this elite group, then faithfully apply one proven networking strategy each week for a year. This will make you a *bona fide* master of networking, and it is the most effective way to build your business or professional practice. Your network contacts will become your referral contacts. Here are 52 proven networking strategies. They work for master networkers. They will work for you.

- “Set networking goals”** – Make them “SMART” goals: “Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timed with a deadline” – for example, “I will join my local Chamber of Commerce by the end of the month.”
- “Block out time to network”** – For real impact, spend at least seven hours each week on networking activities. Begin with four or five hours weekly, then build up from there. Carefully track the time you spend networking. To change your behavior and do more, follow this four-step plan: “Want it, learn it, try it and live it.” Like everything else worthwhile, there are no shortcuts to productive networking. Start today.
- “Profile your preferred client”** – Who is your perfect client? What profile makes this person or firm your target? For business-to-business clients, consider: “location, size of company,” industry, business type and longevity. For business-to-consumer clients, think about gender, education, income and family structure.
- “Recruit your word-of-mouth marketing team** – Build the strongest possible relationships with people who can help you the most. They will be your word-of-mouth (WOM) marketers (also known as “apostles” or “evangelists”).
- “Give to others first”** – No network relationship can develop unless all parties gain from it. When you are the first to give something – professional assistance, material help, your time, encouragement – people will be inclined to give back to you.
- “Create a network relationship database”** – If you don’t log, track and update your contacts, your network will quickly crash and burn. Use contact

management software. Enter every “word-of-mouth referral” and all other significant information.

7. **“Master the top 10 traits”** – Always be positive, sincere, enthusiastic and helpful. Establish trust. Listen well. Jump on all referrals. Show gratitude. Constantly network; make it a primary marketing function, just like sales.
8. **“Diversify your contacts”** – If you operate only in your personal comfort zone, you will limit your network. Get out there. Talk to everyone.
9. **“Meet the right people”** – Effective networking is based not only on “who you know,” but also on “how well they know you” and “how well you know them.” Build a broad and deep network. Don’t just make contacts. Establish long-lasting, meaningful connections.
10. **“Reconnect with people from the past”** – List your high school and college friends, former neighbors, previous work colleagues, fellow team members and old bosses. Contact one person weekly by e-mail or phone. Ask for advice. Share information. Talk about your business, and their activities and interests. Create “positive buzz.”
11. **“Talk to your family”** – Your relatives will love and support you the most. They will be glad to help you build your network if you just ask.
12. **“Stop being a cave dweller”** – If you stay in your office all the time, you’ll never build a strong network. Go mingle. Be around people. Introduce yourself. Leave your cave.
13. **“Join a Web-based networking group”** – To boost your network, go online and join a business networking group (i.e., LinkedIn), start a blog or create an e-mail newsletter.
14. **“Become magnetic”** – How? Watch how “magnetic” people behave. Imitate them. Find “common points of interest” with the people you meet. Engage others intelligently. Overcome your shyness and fear of making the first move. Smile. Say hello. Becoming magnetic is not a complicated process.
15. **“Be a value-added friend”** – Help someone achieve his or her goals. Networking is not based on, “What’s in it for me?” Rather, the foundation is, “What can I do for you?” Find out what your contacts want to accomplish and help them.
16. **“Become a catalyst”** – Networks are great, but not if they are static. Make action happen, and your network will pay off for you in a big way. Show initiative. Get things started. Call someone in your network. Ask for his or her help.
17. **“Find an accountability partner”** – Work with someone in your network to hold each other accountable for meeting specific networking goals. Check in with your accountability partner routinely.
18. **“Volunteer and become visible”** – Being of service is the best way to make yourself known. An old axiom wisely states, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Care about others, and others will care about you.
19. **“Send a thank-you card”** – Do not send it by e-mail. Never enclose your business card. That would change your “thank you” into a self-serving promotion. Buy a few dozen notecards. Send them out. Then buy and mail some more.
20. **“Follow up today”** – A contact won’t become a connection unless you stay in touch. Create a “follow-up report card.” List all of your contacts, the dates you met, the needed follow-up and when you did it. Include boxes for three-, six- and nine-month follow-ups.
21. **“Be ‘on’ 24/7”** – The lead character in the movie *Forrest Gump* is always immediately friendly with everyone he meets. Do the same. Speak sincerely and engagingly.
22. **“Learn to play golf”** – Business and golf go together. That’s why businesspeople often ice their deals with customers and clients on the greens. So start practicing your swing. Or join a gym. Or a club where businesspeople meet.
23. **“Have purposeful meal meetings”** – Taking someone to lunch must serve a meaningful purpose, such as solidifying an important contact. When you go to lunch with a client, keep your eye on the ball, not on the entrées.
24. **“Make first impressions count”** – Networks originate from one-on-one meetings. Are you ready to meet new people? If you do not come across well in your first meeting with a new contact, you may not have a second one.
25. **“Seek out a referral networking group”** – Many organizations exist for the purpose of providing new networking opportunities for businesspeople. Do you belong to one? Why not? Join one today to get serious about networking.
26. **“Join a chamber of commerce”** – Or a trade association, or a professional association. Joining such groups is the crux of networking. But don’t just join. Take an essential additional step. Become fully involved in the group’s activities. If you don’t, the other members will quickly perceive that you joined solely for your own benefit. If you create that impression, you will receive less networking benefit from your membership.
27. **“Sponsor select events”** – This is a great way to build positive exposure. Carefully choose events that match your target market of prospects.
28. **“Host a purposeful event”** – A golf outing is a good one. So too is a Friday happy hour. Other worthwhile events include “elite mixers,” grand openings and sneak previews. The main idea is to find a high-profile event where you can get out in front.
29. **“Ask your own questions”** – Striking up conversations with new business or professional contacts isn’t always easy. Make it more comfortable by asking the right questions: “What do you do?” “What do you like most about your business?” “How did you get started?” “What sets you apart from your competition?” If you ask people to talk about themselves they will reply enthusiastically, and they’ll ask you the same questions.
30. **“Talk about benefits, not features”** – What benefits do your best client or customers derive from your services or products? Tout these benefits to your network. Translate your features into benefits that your contacts understand and appreciate.
31. **“Become a profiler for your business”** – You will turn off new contacts if you use jargon or technical language. Don’t say, “I’m an IT consultant who does analytical work on hard drives.” Instead, say, “I make sure computers work properly, without any problems.” Always explain your role in understandable, specific terms.
32. **“Become a motivational speaker for your business”** – What is your unique selling proposition (USP)? Always explain it to new contacts in a passionate manner.
33. **“Leverage your smallest billboard”** – Your business card should be a potent marketing tool for you and your firm. Is yours? Whatever you do, don’t shove it down someone’s throat. Give business cards out only when others ask for them.
34. **“Give a high-value presentation”** – Deliver presentations that speak to the interests and needs of the audience, not the services you provide. Send 10 people a memo that suggests a terrific presentation you could deliver.
35. **“Create an informative newsletter”** – Present valuable, insightful information that people care about. A poorly developed newsletter will hurt your image, not enhance it. Have it professionally produced.
36. **“Write a press release”** – What is newsworthy about your business? Develop a brief press release on this topic and send it to appropriate, targeted publications. Include complete contact information.
37. **“Write your own identity”** – If reporters aren’t calling to interview you about your operations, write your own story and submit it to the media. In the article, don’t tout your business; instead, showcase your expertise.
38. **“Ask for written testimonials”** – Third-person endorsements are always the most credible. If your customers or clients are pleased, ask them to write testimonials that you can use later with prospects or in your marketing.

39. **“Write down two success stories”** – Word-of-mouth marketing revolves around stories: how a businessperson resolved a problem, how well a professional’s service met someone’s needs, and so on. Focus on two great stories about you and your business. Write them to share with your word-of-mouth team.
40. **“Write a personal introduction”** – When you give a presentation, someone from the group will introduce you. Give that person the words to use for this purpose.
41. **“Toot your own horn”** – Don’t miss opportunities to let others know how well things are going or how good your work is. If someone asks how you are doing, let them know about your latest business or professional achievement.
42. **“Ask for feedback”** – The best way to learn how you come across to others, or what they think of your service, is to ask them.
43. **“Adopt a host mentality”** – Arrive at network events early. Learn what the program is. Map out the meeting room. Introduce attendees to each other. Act like the host.
44. **“Follow the money trail”** – The services you purchase support those who provide them. Have your suppliers done anything for you? Ask for their help.
45. **“Write a letter of support”** – Your network contacts must deal with numerous difficult, even thorny, issues. Learn what they face and write supportive, accurate letters on their behalf to the media, regulatory agencies or other influential parties. Get on the record for them. They will thank you for it, often in the most meaningful way possible.
46. **“Ask for referrals”** – Ask and you shall receive. Say, “I’m expanding my business, and I need your help. Who do you know who ...” This phrasing works, so use these exact words.
47. **“Read the paper with referral intent”** – Newspapers and magazines are filled with stories that represent tremendous marketing opportunities for people within your network. When you see such stories, approach the appropriate contact.
48. **“Conquer your fear of public speaking”** – You can’t become an effective networker if you cannot speak well in front of others. Build your skill.
49. **“Become the hub firm of a power team”** – This requires a “power team strategy” in which you and other firms collaborate on mutual business.
50. **“Become a networking mentor”** – Teach others what you have learned.
51. **“Recruit an advisory board”** – Professionals without access to new information become outdated quickly. Organize a board of close contacts who will keep you current.
52. **“Commit to lifelong learning”** – To become a master networker, read about networking. Then practice, practice, practice.

About the Authors

Ivan R. Misner, Ph.D., founded Business Network International. He is the author of *Masters of Networking*, a bestseller. **Michelle R. Donovan** owns a firm that specializes in helping businesses get referrals.
