



Getting the most from your Networking Activities

Networking can be a great way of meeting potential customers and building relationships with like minded people. It can also be a waste of time if you don't focus your activities for the best benefit of your business.

Many people think that networking finishes at the end of the networking event. We'd say that's when it's only just beginning!

Let's take a step back. People will work with, or refer business to, people that they know and trust. In our view it's all about relationships. The stronger the relationship the more likelihood of people working together.

Yet many people attend one networking event and expect business to start flowing. And when it doesn't they blame the networking event rather than their own lack of post network-event effort!

We've all ended up with piles of business cards at the end of the year wondering where we got them and who the people are. This is the direct result of a lack of a proactive approach and in particular a lack of systematic follow up.

So, how should we approach networking? Here are a few ideas:

- First, determine the best types of events to go to, events where you will be most likely to meet potential customers or referrers of customers.
- When you think you've identified networking groups or functions that will be good for your business, attend a couple of events as a visitor to check them out before you join.
- The best groups will be proactive in making introductions that will be valuable for you and your business.
- The mindset that you take to these events is all important. Set yourself a clear objective for the event, such as setting up a number of follow up 1:1s.



- This objective should see you target a number of people to follow up after the event, say 2 or 3 as a minimum.
- It's best to consider this as the start of your relationship. If you meet someone at a networking event you'll have forgotten them, and they you, within a few days if you don't follow up immediately. They'll end up as another business card in the pile!
- If however you attend an event with the express objective of setting up a minimum number of 1:1s soon after the event, you'll be much more likely to start to build sound relationships that will benefit your business.
- When you meet someone with whom you'd like to further your relationship it's best to express it in a non-threatening manner, such as:

'We seem to have a number of things in common,
it would be great to meet up for a 1:1 to chat
about our respective businesses'

- Follow up this discussion within 24 hours to either make or confirm the appointment.

All of this sounds obvious, but frankly we find that people generally don't do it. At Hawthorn Business Group 95% of the post-networking 1:1s that we have are arranged by us. It's rare for others to do so.

So if you're one of the 5%, well done! If you're not, start setting yourself networking objectives and driving those 1:1s.