



Networking Meetings are Like Moths to Light

How many networking meetings are you scheduled to attend this month? One per month, two per month, one per week? Networking meetings are well marketed. They offer the promise of that one connection that will lead to business. That one person who will become a great connector for you. That one center of influence that seems to know everyone, and instantly opens up their contacts to you.

The problem with networking meetings are that for the 20,30 or 40 people in the room, the odds of that one person you want to meet being there are almost nil. The other people in the room are the same as you; they're looking to meet that one person.



Here's something I've learned after 30+ years of focusing on relationships as the core of business success - the people who are the decision makers, the generous connectors, the centers of influence - they know who they are and the role they fill. And, they don't go to networking meetings.

The networking meeting is like the porch light that attracts moths. The science behind this is called phototaxis. Phototaxis is an organism's automatic movement toward or away from light. Moths are positively phototactic. They seem charmed by the porch light, headlights or campfire (even if it leads to their untimely demise).

Don't be charmed by the promises networking meetings make, but seldom fulfill. Your time is precious. Make the most of your time by going to the places your decision makers and centers of influence attend. For example:

- If your focus is on decision makers of small and mid-sized manufacturing companies, get actively involved in the state and national level manufacturing associations.
- If you want to connect with decision makers of high growth companies, attend Inc. Magazine, Fast Company Magazine, or Venture Capital sponsored events.

- If you want to connect with the CFO, attend CFO conferences sponsored by organizations such as The CFO Forum or Argyle Executive Forums.

Another strategy is to create your own events where decision makers and/or influencers would find value in attending. This could be as simple as a dinner party you host. Invite 6-8 decision makers, some who may know each other, and definitely some who do not. Connect them over a meal. This is a great opportunity to be generous and provide something the decision maker or influencer can't get anywhere else.

If you are a golfer, assemble a foursome that offers connections; a decision maker, an influencer, and one of your current customers. Like the dinner party, a round of golf is relaxed and is 4-6 hours of one on one time, especially if there are a couple of hours at the 19th hole afterwards.

While the marketing of networking meetings is the 100 watt light bulb for salespeople, it is not the best place to meet and connect with the people you want and need. Be thoughtful with your time, your connections, and the activities that deliver results. Don't go to the light. Instead, go to where your decision makers and influencers go. You'll have a much higher probability of making the valuable connections that evolve into the relationships that are the foundation of success.