Get Talking: Successful Networking Tips

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The importance of networking

While building a relationship with your consumer may be one of your main priorities, you shouldn't forget the importance of building connections with other businesses. Each business relies on another business in one way or another, whether it's a stationery supplier, or a car manufacturer relying on a particular tyre company to keep up with their production lines and demands. It is important to build and care for our business to business relations because without them, businesses wouldn't survive.

Networking with the right people is one of the key factors of being successful in business. Growing your business is often about extending your circle of influence and becoming more widely recognised, not only within your own industry or sector, but with customers as well.

From creating introductions to building trust and reputation, networking is a core strength of successful business leaders. When people trust you, they will buy from you and recommend you to people they know. Networking is a skill which can be learned, and the more people you meet at events the better a networker you will learn to be. The most essential tip for successful networking is attending the right events – it's really where it all starts.

If you spend some time researching local business events in your area, you will find many opportunities to network with the right people. If you are a tourism operator, look up your local tourism body and sign up to be notified with their upcoming events. Often there is an annual membership cost involved – a small price to pay in exchange for the valuable contacts you will make.

Simple tips for successful networking

01

Research and attend local industry events.

Once you're a Bartercard member, ask your Trading Specialist what networking events are coming up.

02

Be prepared.

Decide what you want to gain from attending the event before you RSVP or register, especially if there's a financial cost. How would attending the event support your marketing or business development strategy? Apart from a pocketful of cardboard and maybe a wine stain on your jacket, what outcomes will be evident that you attended with a purpose? Plan your transport and parking so you can arrive on time without fluster. Check the daily and breaking news headlines in case you need a conversation starter.

03

Always carry business cards with you -

you never know who you will meet on your way to the office or at your local coffee shop!

04

Know how to market yourself well.

Memorise a 30 second spiel (known as an elevator pitch) which summarises your business and use this as a standard introduction at networking events.

05

Follow up useful contacts with a short email letting them know it was great to meet them.

Write notes on the business cards you collect – where you met the person and how, for example, you think you could solve a problem for them. Within two days add the cards' details and notes to your CRM or other system for maintaining client relationships, while your memory is fresh.

Within a week, make contact via email, phone or social media – connect via LinkedIn, follow them on X, add a comment to their blog. Within a fortnight, try to arrange a meeting or informal coffee chat. Within a month, send them something useful, like a newsletter, an article link or an invitation. By then, you'll know if attending that event was worth your time and effort.

06

Connect with people online.

Networking is no longer limited to events - websites such as LinkedIn are connecting people and creating business relationships in the digital space. If a new contact's business has a Facebook page, like it! Or if they have a blog, ensure you check it regularly. You may have the opportunity to comment on their posts or entries with industry advice, positioning yourself as an expert in your field.

07

Move out of your comfort zone and meet new people.

It's tempting to stay chatting to people you know and whose company you enjoy – often they're your own team. However, moving around the room will put you in sight of a lot more people. Wear your name tag where others can read it.

Remember your purpose and seek out new contacts who could add value to your network and business interests as a customer/client or referral source. Ask someone you know to introduce you to someone you don't. Before handing out your business card to everyone, wait to see if you think it would be welcome; and treat all the cards handed to you respectfully. Remember it's quality not quantity!

A key benefit to joining Bartercard is the networking events which provide opportunities for meeting local business owners within your region. Each Bartercard branch holds annual networking events, attended by members actively looking to do business. Seasonal Trade Shows provide the opportunity to showcase your product or services to hundreds of consumers. Another benefit is the relationship you will build with your Trading Specialist or Branch who will recommend your product or service to thousands of other members within the network.

Victoria Carlton from International Centre for Excellence has experienced the power of networking within Bartercard for her business.

> *Bartercard has helped us fill our courses with children of Bartercard business owners or the business owners themselves and they refer us on to their friends and colleagues which brings us additional cash business. In addition, the networking functions provide us with great opportunities to engage with smart business entrepreneurs. This helps us to learn how to grow our business and gain referrals for all of our courses.*

Networking is just one way of attracting new customers. To attract new customers and network with thousands of cardholders nationwide, request a consultation with Bartercard to discuss the opportunities for your business.

Request a consultation

Get in touch

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