

NETWORKING FOR THE TIMID LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

An Easy Way To Promote your Company & Increase Sales:

We could do role-playing until we turn blue in the face. We could read all the books, watch all the videos ever made, and still some of us would have a hard time meeting and greeting strangers.

We are all different when it comes to assertiveness, being social and public speaking. I have actually been an instructor in workshops where attendees could not stand up and say their own name in front of the other attendees. What are these contractors to do? Essentially, it is absolutely necessary to get the message out about what you do. At some point in the relationship between the contractor and the client, a face-to-face meeting, or at the very least a telephone call, will be necessary. People skills are going to be crucial in order to be successful.

Networking is momentum. The greater the number of people who know you, the greater the momentum will be toward your success. You increase the number of opportunities for potential pieces of business. Networking is being known by those who count. Showing up at the right place and being visible is critical to success. You could meet one of your most influential clients at a local Chamber of Commerce meeting. The key is being there!

Woody Allen said, “ 80 percent of life is showing up.” If you are a little timid about getting up and speaking at a meeting, don’t do it. Simply show up at meetings and shake hands. A helpful hint is that you should be the first one there and the last one to leave! This will give you an added opportunity to shake hands and introduce yourself to people as they enter or leave the room. You may feel more comfortable surrounded by fewer people. Also people will be willing to spend more time with you before or after the event. You won’t feel pressured to deliver the message about what you do in a limited amount of time. It also enables you to walk up to individuals without feeling nervous about approaching the small cliques that form once many of the people have arrived.

It sounds like psycho babble, but it’s possible to turn negative energy into positive energy. Butterflies in your stomach are not necessarily a bad thing. They keep you alert and thinking about what you are going to say. Take your fears and negative thoughts and turn them in your favor. You’re working anyway. You might as well enjoy it! There is little risk in a networking event. Very little can go wrong. Just introduce yourself. Just be there.

How often should you go to an event? For the reticent, the question really is, "How often do I have to go?" You or someone in your company should go to at least two networking events per month and make at least two networking telephone calls a week. These numbers will vary by the size of your company. A larger company with a dedicated sales staff may attend as many as one event per week and make two telephone calls per day.

Do the math; by the end of the year you have done some serious marketing. This formula is a tried and true method for growing your business and certainly not a strenuous one even for the busy unassertive contractor. Take at least some action each day. Never allow a single day to go without doing something to move your business forward, no matter how small. Hand out a business card, call an existing contact, or call a brand new one. Turn existing clients into friends by staying in touch with them, and they become excellent sources of referrals. Remember it may take as much as six months to two years to develop a relationship that will bear fruit. You must remain visible if not vocal.

Networking is so valuable a tool for it to go unused by a contractor. In the long run, its momentum will allow the contractor to work smarter not harder. Others will present potential work to you as opposed to you scratching for each potential deal on your own. It is important to build and nurture these relationships simply by continually making appearances in the same place, even if you don't give speeches.

How long has it been since you last went to a network meeting? If not now, when?

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