



Ivan Misner: Networking

## Networking Faux Pas

Think you're a good networker? Make sure you're not making 1 of these 3 big blunders.  
By Ivan Misner | March 28, 2007

URL: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/marketing/marketingideas/networkingcolumnistivanmisner/article176316.html>

After two decades of running the world's largest networking organization, I've certainly seen a lot of networking faux pas. I've put together a few of the most glaring blunders in networking etiquette I've seen over the years that you should avoid.

### Faux Pas #1: Not responding quickly to referral partners

This one really troubles me. I can't imagine getting a call from a networking partner and not responding immediately, but unfortunately, this seems to happen with some regularity. Not long ago, someone I know had a referral to give a gentleman in his networking group. He called the associate and left a message at his office as soon as he knew the referral was viable. A day went by without a return call, so he called again, saying it was important to connect.

He was finally able to speak to his networking associate at their next meeting. He asked him why he didn't return his call and the associate said, "If I knew you had a referral for me, I would've called you back immediately." He still gave the referral at the meeting, and, to no one's surprise, the person referred ended up working with another vendor because no one got back to him in a timely manner.

Treating each of your networking partners as one of your best clients is critical. Return phone calls from them immediately, as it speaks to your credibility and reliability as a professional.

There are countless examples of people receiving referrals at networking groups and then contacting the referral a few days later. The old phrase, "If you snooze, you lose," is apropos here. If the referral knows you had her name and number on Monday and took your time calling, that sends a negative message about your business.

### Faux Pas #2: Confusing networking with direct selling

One of my company's directors struck up a conversation with a woman business owner at a networking function. When the business owner asked our director what she did, she said she helps owners build their businesses through networking and referrals. The business owner smiled and said, "I'm really good at networking. I've been doing it for a long, long time."

Curious, our director asked her, "So what's your secret?" She stood up straight and said, "Well, a friend and I enter a room together. We imagine drawing a line down the middle. She takes the left side; I take the right side. We agree to meet at a certain time to see who collected the most cards. The loser buys the other one lunch."

The director curiously inquired, "So what do you do with all those cards?" Again, proudly, the business owner said, "I enter them into my distribution list and begin to send them information about my services. Since I have all their information, they're all good prospects, right?"

This is a classic example of an entrepreneur not understanding that networking isn't about simply gathering contact information and following up on it later. That's nothing more than glorified cold calling. It gives me the chills. I used to teach cold calling techniques to business people. And I did it enough to know that I didn't want to ever do it again. I've devoted my entire professional life to teaching the business community that there's a better way to build long-term business.

### Faux Pas #3: Abusing the relationship

There are many ways I've seen networking partners abuse relationships, but the following story is one of the most glaring examples.

A woman I know was invited to attend a 50th birthday party of an associate who used to belong to a networking group in which she also participated. They once had a long-term working relationship, and, out of respect, she decided to attend. When she got to the door, she looked through the window and noticed people were arranged in a semicircle, listening to a presenter in front of an easel board. When she stepped in, it was very obvious the partygoers were being recruited for a business opportunity. As resentful as the woman felt, she and other mutual friends found it difficult to remove themselves from the "birthday party," despite the fact that the only refreshment being served was the company's diet shake!

Never mislead your networking partners. For that matter, never mislead anyone. Trust is everything when you're talking about relationship networking. Inviting people to a "birthday party" that turns out to be a business opportunity pitch isn't being honest with the very people with whom you want to build a trusting relationship.

All these faux pas directly relate to good people skills. The prevailing theme of all three is to treat your referral partners and potential referral partners with professionalism and care. Use networking opportunities to meet people and begin the process of developing a genuine relationship and treat your referral partner like you would a top client. Lastly, always network in a way that builds credibility and trust--be candid in telling your referral partners what you need and what you're asking of them. Do these things and you'll avoid some serious mistakes in relationship networking.

