



Ivan Misner: Networking

Why Getting Published Can Help You Network

It may take a lot of work, but branding yourself as a local expert will do wonders for your networking efforts.

By Ivan Misner | October 24, 2006

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Recently, an associate of mine who's read my books and attended some of my training sessions, called me up and said, "I really love your material, but [oh, I always worry when there's a "but"] why don't you emphasize your ideas about creating your identity as a brand and how it affects your networking efforts more?" He went on to say, "That idea has made a huge impact on my business, and I don't hear you talking about it very often." Well, he was right. I haven't talked a lot about it in my material, though I should. (You'll learn why I haven't up to this point at the end of the article.)

When I first started in business several decades ago, I must say that I had no idea how important it was to focus on branding my company *and* myself in the marketplace as a way of enhancing my networking efforts. I understood the concept from an advertising and marketing perspective, but as a small-business owner, I didn't have the advertising budget to effectively mold myself or my company into any kind of brand (at least, that's what I thought). So I ignored it. Big mistake. It wasn't until the early '90s that I started to think about branding and how it would help my networking efforts.

Networking is all about relationships. Relationships are all about establishing credibility. And credibility takes time. What I needed to do was to expedite that process while still creating genuine credibility with others. Not having much of a budget, I had to get creative about how I could make this happen.

I decided that if I wanted to increase my visibility and enhance my credibility in the community, I needed to be viewed as the local expert. The way I decided to start creating my brand was by writing articles. Now, you may say, "What's so special about that idea? I've heard people suggest it before." Well, the bottom line is, hearing it and doing it are very different things.

Surprisingly, editors and reporters need good story ideas from wherever they can find them. Too many people who seek to be featured in newspapers or magazines send the equivalent of a company brochure. They fail to realize that editors and reporters need hooks, angles and other ways to relate to distracted, overworked, frenzied readers.

Either by phone or letter, tell the editor why readers will be interested in the feature idea you have or why it's newsworthy. What are you doing in your business that strikes a chord in the community? What can you share that will educate that specific editor's audience?

Think about the things you know and understand best. What elements of that knowledge might be of interest to the general public or to a segment of the general public, such as a specific industry or targeted demographic? Then review the types of media outlets that write for that audience. Consider not only newspapers, magazines and industry journals, but also online opportunities such as e-zines, online newsletters and information sites.

The associate I mentioned at the beginning of this article told me he used this idea and worked with it for some time. He's in the travel industry, so he wrote a series of articles about travel and sent them to various outlets each month for several months. He received some responses (all "no thank you"), until one local newspaper finally called him personally and said they'd like to use his piece in the next day's issue.

After it came out, they contacted him again and asked if he'd like to do a monthly piece. After a little while, another media outlet that had seen his work asked him to write for them. He told me today that he writes regular articles for several media outlets. More important, he explained that it has totally changed his business. He said that while most travel companies are going out of business with the vast changes in the industry, he's actually growing and thriving because his articles have created an identity, or brand, for him and his company.

He continues to be very active in networking, and the articles he writes puts him way above his competition because they greatly enhance his credibility when meeting other people. And he always brings some of his recent articles to the

networking meetings he attends. This is important because it creates a relevant connection to your networking efforts.

When you get some of your pieces published, promote them! Your articles won't increase your sales overnight; however, they'll enhance your credibility throughout the networking process, which absolutely increases your sales over time. In addition, my friend told me that he now includes links on his website to some of the online articles he's written as a way of enhancing his credibility with existing and potential clients.

So if this is such a great idea, why don't I suggest it more? In my book, *Masters of Success*, I talk about success being the "uncommon application of common knowledge." If you ask a successful person what their "secret to success" is, you'll almost never hear a secret. Writing articles--consistently and for an extended period of time--to increase your credibility and enhance your networking opportunities is no secret. But it's an idea that most people are just too lazy to implement.

The bottom line is, 98 percent of you won't actually do it. Or you'll do it for a little while and give up. I told my friend this, and he said, "Do it for the 2 percent of people like me who *will* apply the idea. It'll make a difference for them like it did for me."

Well, there you go. That's pretty good advice. So the question now is, are you part of the 2 percent or the 98 percent?

