

Networking for all Seasons

I have been affiliated with the Carroll County Chamber since 2006 and I have noticed a very consistent trend when it comes to networking events, every summer the attendance cuts in half (or worse). Now, as a salesperson I am used to few things: First I am used to people ignoring me (you get thick skin in sales). Second, I am used to people making excuses. I have people tell me all the time “well Mike its summer time and people just don’t network as much.” Or they tell me “with all the vacations it’s just too hard to network.” Or my favorite “it’s just too hard in the summertime to network.” So in the interest of sales, let’s overcome these objections together.

“In the summertime, people just don’t network as much.” And there is truth to this statement. The problem though, it’s still an excuse. I don’t know about you, but my manager doesn’t let me not sell in the summer and my mortgage company doesn’t let me not pay my mortgage in the summer. In other words, if you consider networking a crucial part to your business development then it is an all year activity. If you show up to an event that normally has 20 people and only 10 are there, this time you now have the unique opportunity to learn in depth about those other 10 people. Here is the big key to networking success. The more you listen to others the more business you will gain. We can write a whole series of articles on the topic of effective networking, but for now, just remember to listen twice as much as you speak. In a small gathering you will gather fantastic information to help develop your business.

“With all the vacations it’s just too hard to network.” In a word... WRONG! With very few exceptions people don’t take off more than a week in the summer for vacation (some of us don’t even do that). So the key to a successful event is you and it’s you twice. First, you need to show up. Second you need to invite your circle of influence to the event. Members or not they need to get out and interact. Just think, if all of the “regulars” held this opinion. Think how big the events would be. My mentality is, if it is important enough to attend, it is important enough to invite friends. Your success will be there’s and down the road they will thank you for it. Invest the time in your friends and watch the activity and excitement grow. It is my personal opinion that most people that think about going, don’t show up because they think no one else is going. If you send that invitation and let people know you will be there the results are tangible and measurable.

“It’s just too hard to network in the summer.” Real networking is hard, regardless of when you do it. I have seen a fair amount of “Notworking” at events where people stand around with friends they know and shoot the breeze, and you need some of that, it’s what makes networking fun. However, real networking is engaging new & existing contacts to learn and share ideas and information. You build a network of people you can trust and people want to work with. And then you meet with them again on an individual basis to really dig deep and explore opportunities.

In summary, quit the excuses, listen twice as much as you speak, invite your friends to attend, follow up with individual meetings to really drive new opportunities. If you do it all in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt... who cares, after all it’s hot outside.

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