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Networking: Powerful or Petrifying?

At the beginning of the year many business owners start to consider ways to increase sales. One way is to attend networking events such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, or WOAMTEC (of which I am the West Volusia Florida chapter director!)

But what if you are petrified of networking? How can you turn networking into a powerful, positive experience? Following are some steps to help you go from petrified to powerful!

1. The most important question

"What is your goal for attending the meeting?"

Really, why do you attend? What do you want? Is it to let others know about a special you are offering? Is it to meet some new people? Is it to connect with someone whose services you need? You should set a clear intention/goal for every meeting you attend.

2. Presenting your 60 second introduction

- a. Act and speak naturally. If you suffer from PSF (Public Speaking Fear) then pick one person in the room you already know and imagine that is who you are speaking to.
- b. Make eye contact.
- c. Consider the take away---what do you want the listener to take away from what you have said?
- d. Make it memorable by either, what you wear, a prop, text and tone, and/or a fantastic offer.
- e. Have different versions of your introduction for different settings or for variations in meetings you attend frequently.

3. Questions to create different versions

- a. What is a tip you can offer? (See example below)
- b. What is a special you are offering?
- c. What sets you apart from your competitor?
- d. Who do you love to work with?
- e. What problem do you solve?
- f. What is the key benefit of your product or service?
- g. What is a recent example of a positive customer experience?
- h. What props could you use?

EXAMPLE

Plumber:

"I'm Laura Engstrom from Alternate Design Plumbing. Here's a plumbing tip for you do it yourselfers. Hard black plastic water pipe can easily be removed from its fitting and put back on if you first soften the hard plastic with a hair dryer. If you are not the do-it-yourself type then give us a call, we'll come out and do it for you!"

4. Networking relationships take time

Don't expect to walk out of a networking event with 5 new customers. Most likely that won't happen. Like all lasting relationships it takes time to build rapport and develop trust. When you show up and act naturally (not petrified), get to know the other members, and share valuable information you will eventually reap the powerful rewards of networking!

5. Power of networking

The average person knows 250 people. If there are 15 people in a meeting that know you, then you can potentially increase your network by 3750 people. It's not what you know, or who you know, it's who knows you!

The most important thing to remember is most people feel nervous when networking. Have a plan of what to promote and create an intention before each meeting and you will soon be a comfortable, powerful, networker!