

A Gift for attendees from Linda Griffin at ClearWind LLC

International Women's Day 2009

WOMEN: It's a New Day! Renewing Ourselves; Changing the World

Five easy tips for painless networking

Are you dismayed about the prospect of attending a networking event? Do you feel that they are necessary but uncomfortable? Do you wonder what you could possibly find to talk about with a total stranger? If so, you are missing out on many opportunities to build your network and polish your brand image.

Building and nurturing relationships is one of the three success factors that I focus on with my coaching clients and networking is the first step in creating a relationship. One of the most common reasons I hear for avoiding networking is that the person is an introvert and doesn't have the innate ability to engage in small talk. As Keith Ferrazzi says in his book *Never Eat Alone*, humans are by nature communal and social beings. We all have a desire to connect with others. Most of us have no problems talking to friends and family. The problem comes in when we step outside of our comfort zone and attempt to engage people we don't know well. I believe that Networking is simply a skill that can be learned just like any other. If you look at networking as a way to connect with others, as an investment and not a chore, it will change your focus and create a mindset for success.

Most networking guides start by telling you to hone your elevator speech and to exchange as many business cards as possible. From my personal experience I've found this to be a very awkward way to approach networking. I'm not comfortable launching into a prepared thirty second speech with someone I've just met. I much prefer to get to know the other person a little before talking about myself. It turns out that this is actually a very effective and low pressure way to network. Start by introducing yourself and then ask an open ended question which requires more than a yes or no answer. This gets the other person talking and if you listen closely you're bound to have additional questions. Chances are, the other person will naturally ask about you as well making your encounter a genuine conversation.

Here are my five easy tips for painless networking:

1. Start by setting your intentions for the event ahead of time. Go with a clear view in your mind of the results you hope to achieve. I usually have a goal to make a genuine connection with at least two people. This removes the pressure of going for quantity of business cards and puts the focus where it belongs, on the quality

- of the connections I make. Make a list of specific people you want to meet. Use the action sheet I've included below.
2. Be yourself. I'm much better in small groups or one-on one, so I will approach someone standing alone and start up a conversation. If it's your first time at this type of gathering, share that with the person as an opener. It's a great conversation starter. If you've been to this type of event before, share your experiences.
 3. Spend time with people you don't know well. Resist the urge to stick with your friends or the one new person you meet for the entire event. Not only is it rude to monopolize someone else's time, you may miss out on a wonderful connection.
 4. Listen more than you speak. Your goal is to make a connection, not close a deal. Before the event, check the news of the day, local, national, sports, or international. Find a few things which interest you personally that you can bring up as conversation starters if you find you have nothing else in common. Remember to stay away from controversial topics. Have a business card to exchange but only offer it if you feel you want to continue the relationship. Look at the other person's card, make a comment about it, and write a notation on the back, especially if you promised to do something such as send an email, send a report or call them after the event. Do it right away. You won't remember later.
 5. Keep track of who you meet, what you discussed and what their interests and needs are. The way you maintain and grow the relationship is by offering your assistance with their goals. Share information, a website you think will help them, the name of a contact or introduction, an uplifting or encouraging quote. When you've built a track record of trust and a reputation for helping others you can feel comfortable asking them for help with your goals.

Want to practice? You can network with me in the following ways:

- Become a fan of my new Irresistible Leadership page on Facebook at <http://companies.to/IrresistibleLeadership> and Post a comment in the discussion topic: Networking wins and challenges
- Connect with me on Linked-In at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/lindagriffin> Use this email address to send me an invitation: lindag@aclearwind.com
- Follow me on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/lindagriffin>
- Comment on my blog at <http://www.careershock.com>

When you combine a genuine interest and curiosity in other people with a willingness to reach out and help them, you have everything you need to be a skillful networker.

Reading List

Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book You'll Ever Need by Harvey Mackay

Publisher: Doubleday Business (February 16, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385485468

ISBN-13: 978-0385485463

Guerrilla Networking: A Proven Battle Plan to Attract the Very People You Want to Meet by Jay Conrad Levinson and Monroe Mann

Publisher: Morgan James Publishing (November 20, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1600370160

ISBN-13: 978-1600370168

Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last by Lillian D. Bjorseth

Publisher: Duoforce Enterprises, Inc.; Third edition (January 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0964883945

ISBN-13: 978-0964883949

Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time by Keith Ferrazzi

Publisher: Doubleday Business; 1 edition (February 22, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385512058

ISBN-13: 978-0385512053

Tools

- Networking Goals and Intentions Sheet
- Networking Follow-up Sheet

Networking Event - Goals and Intentions

Event: _____

Date: _____

Purpose for Attending: (what outcomes or results do I want to achieve?)

Specific People I want to meet:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Networking Event – Follow-up

Event: _____

Date: _____

Name of Connection: _____

What we discussed/Next steps: _____

Name of Connection: _____

What we discussed/Next steps: _____

Name of Connection: _____

What we discussed/Next steps: _____



Linda Griffin, founder of ClearWind LLC is an author, speaker and leadership coach. When she started her 20 year career as a Manager at IBM she quickly learned that the skills that made her sought after as an individual contributor wouldn't make her successful in a leadership position. She had to focus on new skills that would help her motivate her team to get things done. She had to prioritize and manage her own time in order to juggle all of the projects she was responsible for.

When Linda started her coaching business she adapted the strategies and techniques to the small business arena. Whether it's private one-on-one coaching, group sessions and teleconferences or webinars, Linda shows leaders, managers and entrepreneurs how to take control and thrive in their businesses and careers. She takes popular topics such as leadership, communication, networking and productivity and removes the mystery on how to apply the theories to day to day decisions. She believes that having fun motivates people and facilitates learning. All of her presentations and workshops contain an element of light heartedness and fun.

Linda publishes a blog at <http://www.careershock.com> , has a fan page at <http://companies.to/irresistibleleadership> and is a regular contributor to the WomenCo website, a Monster® Company. You can reach her by email at lindag@aclearwind.com

Linda is a graduate of Coach Training Alliance and is a member of the International Coaching Federation and The Association of Coaching and Consulting Professionals. She has a B.S. in Mathematics from Auburn University and an MBA from the University of South Florida.