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Casting Your Net For Success

LORI TURNER

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You can take many roads to fetch new leads for your organization – advertising, website marketing and telemarketing are just a few. When you’re selling to other businesses, networking can be a particularly effective.

Networking lets you sniff out contacts you might not meet by cold calling. And, developing relationships with prospects before you call. That makes them more receptive to a meeting.

If it’s so effective, why does networking cause anxiety in so many people? Fear of rejection and being perceived as boring or pushy are some common reasons.

Zig Ziglar’s acronym for FEAR – False Evidence Appearing Real – applies here. We convince ourselves networking should be feared, when in reality, it’s unjustified.

If you fear networking, think about it this way. Your sole purpose is to connect with people and learn something about them. All you need is the person’s card and a point of connection for future follow up. Simply ask questions and be authentically engaged in the conversation. Leave the other person remembering how easy you were to talk to.

Now doesn’t that take the pressure off? You’re not there to sell. If you build rapport with someone, they will ask what you do. And when you ask for their card, they’ll likely ask for yours. This understated networking strategy can set reluctant networkers at ease.

Here are a few additional tips for getting the most from your networking activities – casting your “net” for sales success.

Check out the territory. Before a networking event, ask organizers for a list of attendees. Identify targeted prospects beforehand – checking them out on Facebook and LinkedIn – to identify possible connection points.

Set a goal. Determine the number of targeted prospects you want to meet.

Note at least one point of connection. Make notes about something significant your prospect said. This could include hobbies, common acquaintances or personal causes. Use these as icebreakers when you contact them afterward.

Relax. You’re not there to sell, just to learn more about other people. About 95 percent of communication is non-verbal, so project confidence and don’t cross your arms or take defensive postures. Smiling will relax you and the other person.

Focus on them. Learn what is important to them. Find out what keeps them up at night and help them solve that problem vs. promoting your services.

Show interest and enthusiasm. People love people who are interested in them. Listen and ask questions. Your goal is to engage these folks in conversation and build rapport.

The best start to a relationship is to give someone something helpful. Ask what their ideal prospect looks like and provide a lead. This can make the prospect feel indebted, generating a reciprocal referral.

Don’t let the trail go cold. Stay in touch with people even if they aren’t prospects. You never know when you might need that connection.

Lori Turner is managing partner at RedRover Sales & Marketing.



Lori Turner

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