

Fruitful Networking

“It’s not what you know, but who you know that counts”? Today, although *what* you know is much more important than it ever used to be, it is still true that contacts matter. Sadly, far too many people leave this process entirely to chance.

The first rule of networking is to tell everybody what you do. This is because people like to deal with people who they either know first hand or who have been recommended to them.

Some 5% of people are *active referrers*. In other words, they enjoy recommending products and services.

The 'referral path' can be very interesting. Let's explore how this fascinating chain of human contacts works.

If you haven't seen the film “Six Degrees of Separation”, it's a very interesting concept that claims everyone in the whole world is connected by a chain of seven people. You may not know the people further down the chain, but you can be talking to the people who do know them.

This is one of the reasons why networking is so powerful: it’s not just the people who you meet as you network. It’s all the people that they know who they can potentially connect you with.

Imagine that you are in the centre of a ‘web’ of friendships, relationships and contacts. You then get to know someone new, who of course has their own relationship web. The result is that the two webs are linked by a new thread.

When you step back, you can see that there are millions of webs, each interconnected to each other. You are looking at our global, interconnected human society.

The key is to join those groups which are populated by members of your target market, and people who are interested in reaching the same customers as you.

Having joined, go along to a number of events and start talking to people. The ritual of course is to ask what business the other person is in and exchange business cards.

Practice your “elevator” and “stadium” pitch. Your elevator pitch is the 1-minute version of your company and it's benefits, as you would explain it to someone in a lift with you. Your stadium pitch takes the other extreme, and imagines how you would describe your business to a stadium of thousands, making sure you keep their attention so they don't get up and leave.

How will these contacts help your business? Well, neither of us can be sure yet, can we? However, let me tell you this. Successful people tend to be helpful people. One of the reasons for this is that many people have helped them to get where they are today. They tend to be happy to give information, advice and introductions.

