



# Connection Pros

In last month's column, I wrote about a twelve question networking survey that I presented to 1500 readers of my monthly newsletter, "Networking Central." The survey addressed many different areas of networking, such as skill level, comfort level and more.

Since I only shared some of the results with you last month, allow me to present the rest of my findings:

- The majority of the respondents attend 1-3 networking functions per month.
- Over half of the respondents network mostly at Chamber of Commerce functions with trade shows and other networking groups running a close second and third.
- The two main reasons why the respondents like to network are to do more business and to meet more people.
- Most of the respondents have had formal networking education or training either through programs offered by Networking U or through books, tapes, etc.
- Over half of the respondents said that if they decided to seek out formal networking training, they would prefer it to be presented as a two to four hour workshop.

The last survey question I asked had to do with how comfortable people were while networking. The question was "When you are networking, which of the following challenges affect you?" Here was the list of challenges from which to choose:

- Appearing too pushy
- Talking too much
- Not knowing what to say
- Having nothing interesting to say
- Not knowing what NOT to say
- Saying something stupid
- Approaching new people
- Appearing too needy
- Not knowing how to break the ice
- Bumping into competitors
- General fear of failure



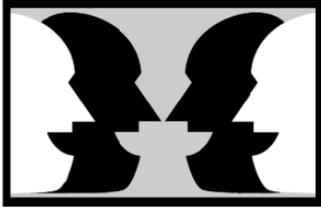
# Connection Pros

- Fear of rejection
- None of the above
- Other

The top three networking challenges, in order, that the majority of the respondents faced were as follows: approaching new people, not knowing what to say, and appearing too pushy. Since approaching new people was, by far, the biggest fear experienced by my readers, I will devote the rest of this month's column to help you overcome this one or at least make you a bit less fearful when you experience it. I will address the other two fears in next month's column.

## APPROACHING NEW PEOPLE

- The first thing I need you to understand is that almost everyone experiences this fear at one time or another. Yes, even I, The Networking Guy, sometimes have to deal with the fear of approaching new people. It is normal to feel a bit nervous when you are about to approach complete strangers and attempt to start a conversation with them. By embracing the concept that you aren't the ONLY one in the room that feels nervous, you should start to feel a little better.
- You should start to believe that many people will be GRATEFUL that you approached them and started a conversation with them. If you see people standing by themselves, one of the greatest gifts you can give them is to walk up to them, introduce yourself and start talking about ANYTHING!! Ever notice how much more comfortable you feel at an event when you are engaged in conversation with others? Have you noticed that once you start talking to one person, other people are more likely to approach you and start talking to you? The sooner you begin to chat with people at a function, the faster you will begin to relax and you will begin to look more confident and self assured in the eyes of others.
- If, by some freak chance, the people you introduce yourself to don't seem very warm or friendly, DON'T INTERNALIZE IT!! You have done absolutely nothing wrong. The biggest mistake you can make while networking is to think that you have done something wrong if other people don't respond to you the way you expected them to. You have no idea what these people are going through. You don't know if they are having a bad day, not feeling well, or maybe dealing with a serious personal issue. It's also possible that some of the people you meet might just be JERKS!! If you approach people with the honest intention of meeting them to learn who they are and how you might be able to help them, you can hardly ever be wrong.



# Connection Pros

All right! I just gave you three great tips on how to start feeling more comfortable approaching new people. What are you planning on doing with this information? Are you just going to flip the page and start reading the next story or are you going to make an ACTION PLAN to start using what you just learned? Please fill in the following blanks: I will use these tips to meet (how many) new people over the next (how many) days. By following your plan, you might actually look forward to meeting lots of new and exciting people at your next networking event. See you next month.