Connection Pros

Title – Why People HATE Networking and How You Can LOVE It! Part 1

Last November, I was presenting a workshop for a group in Phoenix. As I was going through my opening, I casually asked the question, "How many of you truly love the process of networking?" Much to my surprise, fewer than 20% of the participants raised their hands. I couldn't believe it. I had an idea that probably half the people didn't really like networking but I never thought eight out of ten people disliked the whole experience. I had to learn more.

After the program ended, I was talking to a group of attendees and I brought up this epiphany I had about how many people disliked the process of networking. I asked why many of them felt this way and they gave me almost a dozen reasons why networking was not a pleasant experience for them. Due to this brief conversation, I've decided to start working on another book that addresses the many reasons why people hate networking and all the ways people can overcome these feelings by spending more time creating deeper connections with others instead of trying to sell them their product or service. Here are a few examples of why the people I spoke with dislike networking so much:

1. I don't like walking into a room filled with people that I don't know.

The simplest way to overcome this issue is to avoid showing up fashionably late to a connection function, or any function for that matter. Here is the challenge: When you show up late for an event, the room is typically filled with people who arrived on time and have been chatting for some time. They have warmed up and are now networking machines. You, on the other hand, might walk into the room feeling very uncomfortable because not only are there so many unfamiliar people, but those you do know are already in deep conversation with others. Not a great situation, is it?

The best way to avoid this nerve-racking situation **is to** show up for any and all functions 15 minutes early. I know, I know. Only the geeky people show up early, right? Not true. I prefer to believe the adage, the early bird gets the worm. By arriving early, you get to meet the people who put on the event before they are inundated with other guests. These are typically the movers and shakers of the organization, and they are the best people to connect with, especially if you are new to the organization.

You also can start networking with a few people, instead of 100. It's hard to walk into a room filled with people and move right into your networking mode. By arriving early, you can warm up slowly and so can the people you're talking to. They'll appreciate that!

2. I get so tired of people walking up to me, shoving a business card in my hand and telling me everything I NEVER wanted to know about their business. Most of the time, I throw the cards away.

In my experience, walking up to someone, introducing yourself, and handing out a business card is like saying, "Hi, my name is Dave. Here's my card. I really don't care anything about you. All I want to do is sell my product or service."

What's the first thing you think about when someone does that? I don't know about you, but my first reaction is, "Who the heck are you and what are you trying to sell me?" This is not the impression you want to make, especially with potential contacts.

Handing out a business card when you first meet someone is a crutch. It's much easier to let your business card speak for you than for you to come out of your shell and share your name, company, and title.

The best time to hand out your card is when people ask you for one. By waiting until people request your card, you have created the beginning of a connection in their minds. You have engaged them in such a way that they REALLY want one of your cards. Another reason it's good to wait is that you save a fortune on business cards because you aren't giving them out to every Tom, Dick and Harry that you meet.

3. I am a very shy person. Meeting people face to face is hard for me. I much prefer to make connections via e-mail.

To make a real connection with someone, it's important you meet him or her face-to-face, or at least by phone. If your only connection is through e-mail, you might not get the best or most honest impression of him or her. Once you have met and started to create a solid connection, you can use e-mail to build the relationship.

While it might seem that your e-mail network is there for you, when you're really in a bind, you need people you can call on at a moment's notice. E-mail is a wonderful method of communication, but it will never replace the connections you make with people face-to-face.

Over the next few months, I'll address many more reasons why people don't like networking. If you have specific reasons why networking is unpleasant for you, please send them to me at Dave@ConnectionPros.com or call me at 480-860-6100. See you next month.