

Power Up Your Schmooze-Ability

By Denise OBerry

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How many times have you called a friend or business colleague to ask their opinion for a good place to find a product or service you were seeking? Most of us do it all the time. Why?

It boils down to trust. If we think a lot of someone, their opinion has value for us. If they were happy doing business with a specific company, then we'll probably be happy too.

So how do you build trust when you can't meet someone face-to-face over a cup of coffee?

You build trust one step at a time using the powerful networking tool at the end of your fingertips. Your keyboard.

Networking? On the internet? But it's such a cold environment. Just a bunch of words on a screen. Hardly. The internet is what it is because it's made up of people. And people want to get together and talk with other people. We can't help it. It's our nature. Networking on the internet is still one of the most under used strategies for getting the word out about your business.

So where do you start? Well, that depends. There are many places and ways to network on the internet. You can network through online chats, business forums, newsgroups and discussion lists to name a few.

Online forums can bring you a lot of business. But never forget a key rule of networking -- develop relationships that are beneficial for both parties. Don't start visiting forums and blasting out your sales message. Go there to help and get involved. Ask questions. Provide answers. Start thought provoking discussions. You'll gain credibility and people will begin to trust you and your opinions. Think of it this way. You wouldn't walk into a face-to-face business meeting, jump up on a table and start shoving your brochures in people's faces would you? It's the same concept.

Then there are discussion lists. You can reap the same benefit from joining groups and participating with people that have common interests. Once you start participating, you'll find out what a small world the internet can be.

Networking success stories are common occurrences on discussion lists. So, how do you begin to harness the power of networking on the internet?

- Have a goal.

Could your business benefit from strategic alliances? Your goal could be to build business

relationships with complementary businesses.

- Find appropriate groups.

The web has exploded with discussion lists and forums on just about any topic. Search google to start.

- Be professional.

When networking online be professional, but let your personality shine through. Never forget you are dealing with people. Relationships must be built online just like they are when you network in person.

Make the most of the tools that are available to you. My motto is Don't work for your business, make your business work for you -- developing your online 'Schmooze-Ability' is an important piece of that picture.

Denise O'Berry helps small business owners identify and execute the steps to grow their business. Find out more at <http://www.whatspossible.com>

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