

# Networking - Your Way To Build Business Relationships - Part 3

By Dianne M. Daniels

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Dianne M. Daniels  
ddaniels@imageandcolor.com

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Networking - Building Business Relationships, Part 3 By Dianne M. Daniels, Certified Image Consultant / Color Analyst

This issue, we'll continue this discussion of Networking as a way to build relationships with Easy Steps to Lively Conversation and using Body Language to effectively deliver your message.

Lively Conversation is one of many ways to help you be more memorable in your Networking pursuits. Use the steps listed to help you be a more memorable conversationalist:

1. Read at least one newspaper a day - good conversationalists are well-read, well-versed and well- rounded individuals who are interested in what is going on in the world, and can talk about subjects intelligently. Reading the paper makes 'working' any room infinitely more manageable. Information is power. Building your personal 'knowledge bank' lets you contribute to conversations with more ease and interest. Remember, you don't have to be an expert on every current event. Be well-read enough to initiate or contribute to conversations. You need enough knowledge of general topics to pose intelligent questions.

If you are pressed for time, at least scan the headlines and first paragraphs. Fortunately, newspapers are written for busy people and so the major elements of any story -- the who, what, where, when and how -- are almost always covered in the first

paragraph.

Read the business section -- whether or not you find it particularly appealing at first. Whether you have a job, a career, or own your own business, you are in business and you need to know what is going on in the business world. You will be dealing with other people who are in business, and you need to know.

Read the sports page -- even if you aren't an avid fan, you are sure to run into avid fans (perhaps among peers or customers) and that is a tremendous way to build rapport. Your goal in 'working' a room is to build relationships and help people feel comfortable with you. This information could be useful later -- many business deals have been completed at sporting events!

Read the lifestyle section. Here you will find feature articles, book excerpts and reviews, humor, editorial commentary, fashion news, and articles on health, social issues and...well, lifestyles.

2. Read newsletters, professional journals, and minutes - sometimes we are invited to events sponsored by organizations with which we're not entirely familiar. Such events as charity fund-raisers, political dinners, or clients' Christmas parties may require some special preparation. The best way to get a handle on any organization is to read its newsletter or professional journal. These publications can be invaluable resources. If you invest the time to read them, you will be well compensated. You won't be an outsider; you will be familiar with the group and its people, and have all the information you need to ask questions and start conversations.

Should you recognize an organization's member or a company's staff member or executive from a photo you saw in the newsletter or journal, you can bet that person will appreciate and welcome you. The same is true of reading minutes of the organization's meetings (if publicly available). You will impress people with your interest, get a better feel for what has been going on in the group, and you'll be prepared to contribute interesting and pertinent information to conversations.

3. Take note and take notes - Other people's clever remarks and stories can be interesting, humorous, or poignant conversation starters. These statements or situations come from friends, associates, children, people on the street -- practically anyone. They happen in the home, the office, at the health club or hair stylist -- anywhere you have your ears open. One advantage of these stories is that the hero or heroine is always someone else. Public speakers are taught to use stories with the premise that 'Stories sell'. Whether you're selling a product, service or in the case of Networking, yourself, stories can create immediate relationships and common ground.

4. Use humor - Humor has a special way of bringing people together. It can quickly establish rapport and warmth among people who would otherwise be strangers. It's a unique and magical elixir that can even heal the body. You don't have to be a standup comic to use humor. Humor can be defined in two ways: First, it is the quality of being funny; and second, it is the ability to perceive, enjoy or express something funny. But humor should be used judiciously, because it can offend as well as delight. Use the AT&T rule to check any story or joke. Is it Appropriate? Is it Tasteful? Is it Timely?

5. Listen actively, not passively. Active listening means hearing what people say, concentrating on them and their words, and then responding. When we really concentrate on that one person, we improve our chances of remembering both the person and the conversation.

### Using Body Language to Effectively Deliver Your Message

'It's good to meet you' is only believable if your warm, sincere smile matches your words and is reflected in your eyes. This line doesn't play very well through a frown, or even through a look of indifference. Eye contact is critical in building rapport. A roving eye gives the impression of insincerity. Eye contact does not mean glaring or staring, which can be rude. 'Looking away' may suggest that we're scanning the room for better opportunities.

We learn a lot about other people from their eyes, and show them a lot about ourselves with ours. A handshake is the business greeting in America. Jellyfish need not apply here. A firm clasp is the handshake of preference for greeting people, agreeing to a deal, and departing as friends. Here are some Handshakes to avoid:

The Jellyfish. A limp hand moves your way. You grasp it and it turns to mush. People with jellyfish handshakes create the impression that they are spineless-an unsavory perception, for sure.

The Knuckle Breaker. Your hand disappears into a vice and comes back the worse for wear. This kind of power play is best left to members of the World Wrestling Federation.

The Finger Squeeze. This person doesn't clasp your hand; he or she grabs your fingers only. When done with a light touch, this gesture appears prissy and/or suggests that the person isn't sure he wants to touch your whole hand.

The Covered Handshake. In this handshake, one of the parties puts his or her left hand over the hands clasped in the handshake. Those of us who are 'touchers' may perceive this as a show of

warmth. But others may see it as a power play or feel that they are being patronized. There may be times when a covered handshake is perfectly appropriate. Be sensitive to other people's responses, and let your intuition be your guide. Men have been trained from childhood to shake hands. Women must master the art as well. It's up to the woman to extend her hand first, whether she is meeting a man or another woman. Men are taught to wait and see if the woman initiates a handshake.

A good handshake involves web-to-web contact. Look at your hand: the area between your thumb and forefinger is the 'web'. Shaking hands with someone means making sure that your 'web' contact their 'web'. This is a complete handshake, one that means you're not avoiding contact or conversation.

Another handshake 'don't' involves a rapid up-and-down motion, or 'pumping' the other person's hand. This type of handshake is not only tiring, but may be injurious to someone who is older or frailer than you are. If hearty, pumping handshakes are part of your outgoing personality, don't stop being outgoing, just tone down your handshake so as not to injure or offend anyone.

Now that you're a Lively conversationalist and you know more about Body Language and handshakes, next month we'll complete the Networking series with a discussion of Cultivating Relationships After The Event, including when to ask for something from a new business relationship and ways to say Thank You.

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