

Start The New year By Turning Holiday Contacts Into Contracts

By Leni Chauvin

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The relatives are gone. You've eaten the last of the turkey. The sales are over, and you never want to see anything with sugar in it again for as long as you live! Welcome to January, a new year, a new beginning, a time to move forward. Yet it is also a time to reflect upon the festivities of December and ask yourself a very important question: "How'd I do?" No, no. I'm not asking if you got the last robotic dog in the store or the new skis you were hoping for, but how did you do with all the business opportunities that were staring you in the face throughout the holiday season? Were you prepared for them? Did you recognize them? Will you follow up on them?

"Business opportunities? What business opportunities?" you're probably thinking. "I just hung out with family and friends this year. There was no business to be had at Cousin Fred's." Wrong. The holidays are so hectic--places to go, people to see, things to do--that we sometimes overlook the obvious. If you were caught up in the whirlwind of December activities and failed to see the potential of the brief encounters you undoubtedly had, don't despair. There's still plenty of time to start turning those holiday contacts into contracts!

Start moving your business forward in the new year by moving your thoughts backwards. Think about every interaction you had over the holidays. Then with pen and paper in hand, ask yourself these important questions and write the answers down:

- Who did I talk to?
- Where were we?
- What did we talk about?
- What did I learn?
- How can I help them?
- Who might benefit from either an introduction to the people I spoke with, or from my sharing my newfound knowledge with them?

Yes, that's right. Start the new year by thinking of other people, showing them that not only are you interested in them and their successes, but that you are prepared to help them create those successes. Shift your thinking from, "What's in it for me?" to, "How can I help you?" Before you know it, others will find their way into your rooting section, cheering you on, and helping you become more successful any way they can. You see, it's a simple rule of human nature: help enough other people get what they want and when you need help, it will be there for you.

After you've figured out who you met and what you discussed, follow up and tell people how much

you enjoyed talking to them. Let them know that you'd like to get to know them better, and to find out more about their product or service because you want to be certain you understand how you would recognize a good lead for them. React to any surprise or skepticism you might encounter by explaining that this is just normal operating procedure for you. Let them know that since such a large part of your business comes from referrals, you like to give out at least as many referrals as you get. Make sure they understand you're not looking for anything in return.

Set up a lunch date with your new contact and be true to your word. Learn more about them and never once try to promote yourself. Introduce them to others in your network with whom they might form strategic alliances. By being sincere and diligent in your efforts to send others business you'll develop a well-deserved reputation of being a business "matchmaker," someone "in the know," and someone who cares about helping others. You'll be amazed at how quickly you, in turn, will become a referral magnet.

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Leni Chauvin is a Certified Professional Coach and an expert in building business through strong referral networks. She coaches individuals and groups who want to have outrageously successful careers AND equally phenomenal lives. Visit <http://www.superstarnetworking.com> to learn more and to subscribe to NETWORKING GAZETTE, Leni's FREE e-mail newsletter.
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