

SUCCESSFUL HOLIDAY NETWORKING



by Mary Erlain

The difference between regular networking and holiday events is that with the latter there is more small talk, less focus on business development, and a "let's party" attitude. Here are some keys to capitalize on opportunities during the holiday season.

KEY #1 – DO YOUR RESEARCH

Review the upcoming events and decide what the best use of your time is. Don't forget to ask others in your network what their experiences have been. With the internet, it is easy to do research if you have the information on who is potentially coming to the event.

"Here are some keys to capitalize on opportunities during the holiday season."

The use of Social Media can be especially helpful, so that you can learn about the guests before you ever meet them. Your conversations can be more on point. It also shows people that you talk to that you are prepared, which can also reflect in how you work on a project.

KEY #2 – SET SMART GOALS

When focus and attitudes shift during the holidays, you being at the top of your game can create that slight edge. **SMART** goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely/Tangible. Having clear goals set for your first quarter of 2015 can help you outline what you need between now and the end of the year to start the next year strong. Set goals for business development – how many new centers of influence do you want to meet? How many new leads do you want in your pipeline? How much do you want to earn by the end of the first quarter in 2015? How much is in your pipeline currently?

Set **SMART** goals for each of these prior to going on and doing any holiday networking.



Additionally, creating a time picture for your month of December will be helpful. Use colors to indicate personal time, BD time, implementation of work hours, etc. Measure how well you stuck to your time picture on a daily and weekly basis. Adjust accordingly to meet your goals.

KEY #3 – READ THE ROOM

Get to the event early. Take a peek at the nametags on the table. It's a bonus if the company names are also listed. Use your Smartphone to check people out using the LinkedIn or Google apps. Determine how many of the people in attendance can help you meet your goals. Make a short list of the people you wish to meet. If you have happened upon an event that will not meet your needs, cut your losses and leave early. Look at this as a gift of time to spend elsewhere on your **SMART** goals!

Assess the energy of the room at the door. It is easy to spot people's objectives by watching their body language. Once the party shifts to be just a party, it might be time to bid farewell.

KEY #4 – KNOW YOUR MESSAGE

Use the 7 C's of a good elevator pitch-Concise, Clear, Compelling, Credible, Conceptual, Customized, Consistent.

Concise – give a lot of information clearly but using just a few words.

Clear – easy to understand. Refrain from using acronyms

SUCCESSFUL HOLIDAY NETWORKING

and complicated words. Keep it at a 5th grade education level.

Compelling – create interest in your message. Intrigue someone to ask a question. Use tone and inflection in your voice. Passion in what you do must come across.

Credible – your message must be capable of persuading people that what you do will bring them success in some way. It also should never be inflated above what is true and real.

Conceptual – stay high level in your message. If a person wants more details, let them ask. It is easy to lose people when too many details are given, especially if they are visual learners. They simply cannot see it.

Customized – there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all message. Change your message to fit your listener.

Consistent – not to be confused with what I just stated in customized, consistent messages mean that the core of the message does not change. Your verbiage may adjust to meet your listener's needs, but at the heart of the message, you are still expressing the same thoughts.

In the end, state:
Who you are...
What you do...
Why you do it....

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHER PERSON!

Practice your message with your trusted business allies to gain their honest feedback before you trip over your tongue where it counts.

KEY #5 FOLLOW-UP

Always follow up within 3-5 days of an event. Refer back to when and how you met. Remind them of something unique within your conversation. Explore reasons to meet with someone. Review your goals in advance of your follow up.

Leaving voicemails should let them know where you met, when you will be available so that you can avoid phone tag at all cost. Keep your voicemails to a minute or less.

Sending emails should be individualized. Do not list dozens of names in the To or CC field. Give purpose to your subject

box. If you are not good at spell checking, don't solely rely on the computer. Read your email backwards aloud. You will be amazed at how many errors you will find. It is awkward to do, but absolutely helpful in sending a quality email.

Make your follow up part of your daily/weekly routine. Create a SMART goal if you struggle in this area.

KEY #6 FOLLOW-UP TRACKING

$M = A + B + C + D$... sounds like a math equation.

M = How many people did you Meet at the event?

Count the business cards!

A = People in your target market that stated some need or problem they have that you can fix

B = People you determined are in your target market but the conversation did not declare a need

C = Centers of influence and referral sources

D = Everyone else that you met

If you walk away with everyone in the D column, the event was not worth it in your BD efforts. If you have numbers in the A, B, or C columns, follow-up effectively to get the most out of the event.

KEY #7 – GIVE FIRST!

In this holiday time of year, don't forget to give first. That doesn't mean just leads and referrals. Give gratitude for the relationships that have helped you all year long. Those words are lasting in the BD world. They go way beyond the box of chocolates, card, or promotional items. They are golden in BD!

**Happy Holidays from Mary Erlain at
Peak Development Strategies.
May you prosper in the 4th quarter 2014
and have a successful 2015!**

Mary Erlain is President of Peak Development Strategies since 2007. As a published author of the "10 Answer Keys" business book series, international speaker, coach, and consultant, she helps her clients significantly accelerate growth in their businesses. Mary offers business professionals the support, guidance, and direction they need to thrive in their business roles. She is the Director of Training and Development as well as a Certified Sales Auditor with Verde Martin. Mary can be reached at M.Erlain@Peak-DS.com. Visit her websites at www.peak-ds.com and www.the5generations.com.