NETWORKING | SKILLS

The 7 Habits of Highly Horrible Networkers

There is a time and a place for networking— it's called ANY time, and ANY place.

by **Scott Ginsberg**

plus ATTACHMENT | 1506 words | 8 pages

> *As of this writing (September 19, 2005) young Mr. Ginsberg has worn a name tag that reads, "Hello, my name is Scott" for 1783 days— in less than a 100 more days, that will be five years! Why? For starters, Scott is delightfully nuts— and, he's one of those 'experts' who believes that card-carrying (literally) been-there, done-that experience is the only thing worth teaching. His field is networking, and his power tool is approachability.*

Networking is a term that didn't exist (academically) until almost 40 years ago. It's a word uttered in and around the business world every day, yet is unclear to most as to how it actually works. Still, it's a fundamental tool to the success of any business.

By definition, the term networking is the development and maintenance of mutually valuable relationships. It's not schmoozing; it's not just handing out business cards, selling, marketing or small talk. Those activities are part of networking, but unfortunately, many people's misunderstanding of the term causes them to network ineffectively.

The following are *The 7 Habits of Highly Horrible Networkers*™, and they can stand in your way of developing mutually valuable relationships. So, next time you attend your Chamber or Association meeting, keep these ideas in mind so you can offer the most value to your fellow networkers.

Habit #1: Attitude

Much like the development of any skill, networking begins with attitude.

Unfortunately, Highly Horrible Networkers have the wrong attitude.

If you've ever attended a networking function before, perhaps you've encountered business people that act in the following ways:

The hard sell— they believe networking is about one thing and one thing only: selling products and services to everyone in the room.

Business only— they're not there to make friends. They're not there to have fun. And they're certainly not interested in developing mutually valuable relationships.

It's all about me— they don't take the time to help and share with others, but rather focus on their own needs. In other words, they can't spell “N-E-T-W-O-R-K-I-N-G” without “I.”

Attitude is fundamental to effective networking. In fact, it's the most important habit to understand.

Habit #2: Dig Your Well WHEN You're Thirsty

One of my favorite networking books is called *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty,* by Harvey McKay. It's probably the most well known text on this subject. The key to McKay's work is making your friends, establishing contacts and developing relationships— before you need them. Getting what you want by helping others get what they want first.

Enter the Highly Horrible Networkers, who only network because:

a) They need new customers
b) They have a new product or service to sell
c) Their boss forced them to do so

Take my friend Lawrence, for example. He's quite successful in the insurance business; however he recently approached me about using networking to obtain some hot leads.

"My numbers are down. My boss is on my back. I gotta get out there and start networking…or else! What do you suggest?"

> ***"Networking takes time," I explained, "and you can't expect to come into loads of business or dozens of potential clients without developing the relationships first."***

As you already learned, networking is the development and maintenance of mutually valuable relationships… over time. If you try to dig your well WHEN you're thirsty, you may never find a drink.

Habit #3: Dealin' the Deck

This is a dangerous one, and it happens all the time. Have you ever seen people distribute 173 of their business cards during the first five minutes of the event? They move as quickly as possible from one person to the next. They don't make eye contact, they don't ask to exchange cards— they just deal them out.

"Here's my card, call me if you need a designer! See ya later."

"But…I…never even got your name!" you muse.

This is guaranteed to make people feel puny and insignificant. Notice, these Highly Horrible Networkers don't spend time actually meeting and establishing rapport with new people; but rather concentrate on giving out as many cards as possible. It's quantity over quality, right?

Wrong.

Dealin' the Deck is one of the most common networking pet peeves. Whenever I give my program *The Habits of Highly Horrible Networkers™,* I walk out into the

audience for a quick demonstration of this habit. I grab a stack of business cards and quickly jump from table to table tossing out dozens of them without as much looking at the audience members I'm handing them to.

Unfortunately during one speech, it backfired.

Literally.

Last year, I was demonstrating Highly Horrible Habit #3 when speaking at a local business meeting. While hopping from table to table as dozens of cards flew through the air and into people's laps and salads, someone yelled out, “Oh my God!”

I stopped dead in my tracks. I looked back at the head table and noticed that one of my cards landed in the centerpiece…

which was a candle!

MY BUSINESS CARD WAS ON FIRE!!

I threw down the microphone, lunged at the table and snatched the burning business card from the candle! As I toppled over the chair in front of me I yelled something to the effect of “Oh my God!” shook the flames off my half burnt card and regained my balance to a roaring applause/laughter from the audience.

"And…uh…this just goes to show you ladies and gentleman,” I fumbled, “When you deal the deck of business cards without eye contact or consideration… uh… people may as well set them on fire— because they're not going to read them anyway!”

Nice save.

Habit #4: Unprofessional Information

It's remarkable how often some business cards will contain unprofessional information.

Have you ever received someone's card with one of those ambiguous, offensive and

questionable email addresses with AOL, Hotmail or Yahoo?

Not only are those email servers frustrating and ineffective for business communication, but just imagine how it looks when someone has to send business emails to:

HotLips98@aol.com
KaylasMommyRules@yahoo.com
Isellcars2U@hotmail.com

I have nothing against AOL, Hotmail or Yahoo. But if possible, always send and receive emails using the address of your organization's website, i.e. scott@hellomynameisscott.com. If you must use free servers like MSN, SBC and the like, choose a simple username that doesn't question your professionalism, i.e., jackgateman@yahoo.com.

Habit #5: Sit with the Wrong Company

I'll never forget my first Chamber meeting. One afternoon I sat down with six other local business people for our monthly networking lunch. Naturally, the first thing I did was look at everyone's nametags. (Not only to learn their names but to examine the effectiveness of their nametags' design and placement.)

But these were the nametags I saw: ADM Financial, ADM Financial, ADM Financial, ADM Financial, ADM Financial, ADM Financial, Scott. (Company name changed to protect the victims.)

Highly Horrible networkers not only attend meetings with their friends and/or coworkers, but they talk and sit with them the entire time!

These are people with whom they've worked five days a week, eight hours a day for the past three years! This is not a good technique to maximize your company's visibility.

This habit creates an elitist, unfriendly attitude. And think how uncomfortable this makes the one or two people sitting at the table who don't work for that company! It's unfair to them because they're unable to meet a diverse group of people with whom to develop mutually valuable relationships! Remember:

> ***If you're sitting with YOUR Company— you're sitting with the WRONG company.***

Habit #6: Small Talk is for Suckers

Highly Horrible Networkers forget about the small talk. It's a waste of their time. They don't ask or answer about “New and exciting things happening at work” or “How Thanksgiving was,” they simply jump right into (what they believe to be) the most important part of the discussion: selling 17 of their products before the salad arrives.

Has this ever happened to you? For example, has someone ever introduced themselves, breezed right through the conversation and flat out asked you for a referral?

Refer you? I don't even know you!

Reciprocating self-disclosure is the most effective way to build rapport and ultimately develop trust. The people you want to do business with are those with whom you have built that rapport and trust. So, small talk is not for suckers. Debra Fine, author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk* put it best when she said:

> ***“Small talk is the biggest talk we do.”***

Habit #7: Limitations

Finally, Highly Horrible Networkers believe there is only one specific time and place for networking. It's called “A Room with A Sign Posted Outside That Says So.” In other words, they only network when someone forces them to. They don't believe there are networking opportunities in places like elevators, busses, supermarkets or parks.

That's it? A measly half hour for networking? Doesn't give you much time, does it?

> ***The truth about networking is that it can happen anytime, anywhere. There is a time and a place for networking— it's called ANY time, and ANY place.***

Scott Ginsberg has written two books: *HELLO, my name is Scott* and *The Power of Approachability*, published dozens of articles and given speeches around the country. Scott has worn a nametag all day, every day since November 2, 2000, to encourage people to become friendlier and more approachable. He has been internationally recognized as the world's foremost field expert on nametags by the Washington Post, CNN, The Associated Press, Headline News, USA Today and dozens of other media outlets.

Scott is a member of NSA (National Speakers Association) and works with people and organizations around the country who want to become effective, engaging communicators - one conversation at a time.

To learn more about Scott and subscribe to his FREE! *Building Front Porches* e-zine, visit his website here: HelloMyNameIsScott.com.

And Scott has one of the most informative and entertaining blogs on the web, here: HelloMyNameIsScott.Blogspot.com

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62 Ways to MAXIMIZE Your Approachability

How to maximize the seven categories of approachability: Willingness to develop new relationships... Dynamics of conversation... Non-verbal behaviors... Authentic personality... Openness of personal space... Openness of mind and heart and realize the five benefits of being approachable: opportunity, confidence, permission, comfort and trust.

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Scott's goal is to help the reader change his or her paradigm of communication and think of every interaction- big or small, online or off- in terms of approachability. The five-fold result is increased opportunity, confidence, people's permission, comfort and trust.