LISTENING | PROSPECTING | SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Look for "Listening Opportunities"

It's fast and precise!

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902 words | 4 pages

“Business breakfasts" or other networking type events can be a great opportunity for you to meet new people and make contact with potential business partners and customers - If you know the right way to interact with people, that is.

A common mistake is to fall into the trap of thinking you have to talk about yourself first.

As you can probably imagine there is a lot of "*nervous energy"* and "*anxiety"* flowing when people are trying to put themselves in the best light possible telling each other about their services.

However, doing that can actually produce poor results. With everyone wanting to get their "say" in - most people are not listening!

So what to do if you find yourself in a similar situation? Simple! Turn your telling into a *“Listening Opportunity”* and…

Stop Telling (Selling) and Start Discovering

Stop the unproductive idea of talking about yourself, and instead ask about them and listen and respond to what they have to say about any challenges they might be having personally, professionally or in their work or business.

Doing so keeps you calm while you quickly qualify people as to whether there is any value talking with them later on. This is the fastest way to increase your bottom line as well!

Here's an approach I use when I network at a meeting of corporate business leaders and owners. I find that it's a great "ice breaker" You can easily adapt it for your own situation.

In a light hearted way I ask the question after introducing myself…

"So how can I help you?!!"

Usually the reply that comes back with a grin is…

"I don't know! How *can* you help me?"

Too which I will respond with a smile…

"I don't know either, though we can soon find out… what kind of business are you in?"

Once I established that I'm talking with the right person in terms of what I have to offer, I then move on to ask these types of questions…

"What do you find are your greatest challenges in the area of your sales or sales people?"
"Do you ever feel you or your sales people could be more effective but not sure how?"
"Are you satisfied with the results your sales people are getting for you?
"What sort of challenges do you face with selling your products/services?"
"How is that affecting you?"
"Does that also possibly affect you in the area of (describe a knock-on effect)"
"Have you done anything, or are you doing anything to resolve these challenges?"
"How did that work out?"
"What did you feel worked/didn't work?"
"If you could do it all over again, would you do it differently?"
"Have you thought about what you think the problem might be?"
"What if the reason you're only doing marginally better when you took that course of action, is because the cause of your problem might not be what you think it is… what if it was because of something else? Have you ever thought about that?"

Of course, adapt these questions to fit your own situation.

So here is what I do:

1. I ask them about their business and personal related challenges.
2. I let them talk while I listen without interruption and no sales talk.
3. I ask them to expand on the answers they give and ask more questions if appropriate.

At the right time, if I find I might be able to help them (and they indicate they are prepared to be helped) I then make a short statement followed by a final Qualifying Question. Something like this...

“Well it might be that I can help you resolve this and if this is something of interest to you, perhaps I could give you a call tomorrow to explore further about whether we might be able to do something together… would that be OK for you?”

The answer is always "Yes" because we are talking about something that is important to them. And we’ve both qualified that they want to do something even before I ask the final Qualifying Question because is all in the dialogue!

I will then set a time, politely excuse myself and seek other opportunities. You can keep yourself busy for a whole week from just one hour of talking with people

It’s Fast and Precise

Each “*listening opportunity*" takes no more than 2- 4 minutes, after which I move on to the next "*listening opportunity*".

The world is full of opportunities when you:

1. Question conventional wisdom.
2. Rethink the way you think.
3. Do things differently!

The key to creating a *"Listening Opportunity"* I described is knowing how to ask the right types of questions at the right time. This isn't hard, but you do need to shift your thinking a little.

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