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Why do business networking groups hate network marketers so much?(And how to use consistency to win them over)

There are six primary problems that network marketers deal with when entering into a business networking meeting. These, along with the three primary misunderstands about the process are addressed in the following article.

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When George told me that the topic of this month's magazine was going to be all about consistency, I said "I've got the perfect article for you!" If you are new to the world of business networking, then you will get a clear understanding of what to prepare yourself for and have a much clearer game plan. If you have been in networking and haven't had the success you expected, this article will show you where you may have gone wrong in the past, so you can implement this effective marketing channel with a more appropriate approach.

As a business strategist and trainer, I have been using networking groups like BNI, local business associations and chambers of commerce breakfast or after-hours groups for years to meet new people and expand my practice. Depending on where you live, there may be several of these "leads" meetings going on each week. They can be very exciting and offer a chance to learn about individuals and a wide variety of industries.

> ***The immediate allure is normally the formal passing of referrals from one member to another and the sharing of testimonials.***

While participating in these groups, I have experienced a real disdain for network marketers from the more traditional business owners and sales professionals in these organizations. I have seen groups fall apart when the ratio of traditional businesses to network marketing businesses is too low. I have even seen groups that tell network marketers either not to talk about the opportunity, which undermines their purposes for being there, or that they are not welcome at all. It can be pretty harsh. Can you relate?

Hopefully your experiences haven't been this negative, but I have seen this to be reality in many situations. This can be very disheartening when you are very excited about your opportunity and feel like you hit the mother lode of local, qualified prospects, only to have people look down on you, your company and/or products because of the business model used to distribute them.

What happened to make people so upset about network marketing? When you start to explore the reasons, a lot of it has to do with consistency, or more accurately, inconsistency.

> ***My goal with this piece to help you be more sensitive to what may be underlying some of the challenges that many network marketers face when using this marketing method to grow their teams, to empower you to hopefully rise above the many people that paved the path before you.***

I will use some broad brush strokes in the process, but understand it is more for educational purposes and that your personal experiences will hopefully never be as challenging. Then again, if it was so easy, everyone would be doing it.

There are six primary problems that network marketers deal with when entering into a business networking meeting:

1. How long each member has been involved in business networking
2. The members' attitude toward the network marketing industry
3. Your credibility in the field of your product or service
4. Their knowledge of and/or experience with your company and fellow associates
5. The solutions your products and/or services offer to the average business owner
6. The strength and nature of your customers and sphere of influence.

The first three have direct ties to consistency that we'll explore.

There are also three primary misunderstandings about the process of business networking that complicate things for network marketers, especially if they have never used this form of marketing in other business endeavors. This lack of experience usually lends to two of the bigger mistakes that occur in business networking. We'll focus on two of them in this article.

Let's start with the general misunderstandings to set the stage; as you may have seen these first-hand or already committed these mistakes.

> ***The first big mistake that people make when they go into a group setting and have the chance to do a 30 or 60-second commercial to promote their business, is that they are trying to sell directly to the group.***

Right now, you might be thinking, "Of course I want to sell my products/services to the group! Why else would I attend the meeting? Some business strategist you are!"

Please don't misunderstand me! I want you to pick up any customers you can at the group, but the group by itself is a very limited audience. There are only so many people in the group that will be qualified customers or be in a position to become a new distributor, and it normally doesn't take long to determine who they are.

I have seen so many people, from both traditional businesses and network marketing, attend a meeting anywhere from one to four times, only never to return, because they felt like they identified all of the potential customers in the group. This is the typical hunter versus farmer attitude that is often discussed in network marketing. In their mind, their work was done, but in reality it hadn't even started. For anyone that understands the game of networking, this lack of consistency, only showing up a couple times, will normally short circuit your opportunity to get any business.

If selling to the group is shortsighted, then you might be wondering where the real power is in networking. For this, we will reference Joe Girard, who was in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the best car salesman. After polling wedding halls and funeral homes, he discovered that the average person knows about 250 people. This is the origin of the magic number many trainers reference when talking about networking, as it is really getting access to the 250 people in the other persons network that you are hoping to accomplish, or the referral.

> ***If you put your self-promotional infomercial together properly, the potential customers in the group will self-identify.***

Writing an effective elevator speech has been the topic of many other trainers, so we won't really get into it here, but getting customers in the group is very similar to asking people if they know anyone interested in setting up passive income streams where they reply, "Yes! Me!"

This leads us to the second mistake: having a short-term attitude toward business networking and networking groups and thinking that the process or groups will produce immediate results.

I have talked to a number of people that get disillusioned with networking after two or three meetings if they have not gotten a referral or no one in the group has approached them to do business. They decide it's not for them, so they quit coming around and don't return your calls. Does this sound like another group of people you have had to deal with?

In my 8-Prong Integrated Marketing Method class (www.tinyurl.com/5yv8dm) where referral generation is its own marketing channel, one of the cornerstone elements of getting a referral is having a relationship. The last time I checked, relationship building takes time. When I do live trainings on the topics of networking or referrals, I like to remind participants that most of them didn't meet and get married to someone in under 3 months, and in some cases 3 years. Networking relationships can take a long time as well and require a long-range strategy and attitude.

You are going to have to earn the respect of the group. Even if you have a respected member in the group bring you in and endorse you, your products and/or services to the rest of the group, which is the ideal situation, it is probably going to take anywhere from 6-12 months of consistent attendance and participation before you will begin to get good quality referrals on a regular basis. With some people in the group, it won't take that long, but if you want people to trust you, you will need to show dependability before most will be willing introduce you to their prize contacts.

Consistently appropriate behavior and participation will get

you to a more effective position faster and is what traditional business owners that have been networking for years are looking for.

You may remember, the first challenge you face as a network marketer is the business networking experiences of the traditional business members in the group, along with the age of the group itself. You will want to get this information as quickly as possible when you enter the group environment, or ideally, before you enter, so you can prepare yourself accordingly.

Many business networking groups are free or low cost to participate in. For this reason, they appeal to many network marketers, who normally don't have a large marketing budget. The longer the group has been established, the greater the chance there has been a number of network marketers that made the mistakes we discussed and soured the more seasoned business networkers on the value of certain classes of businesses that visit the group. Unfortunately, just like the knee-jerk response many people have to the idea of being involved in a network marketing business, based on previous exposure to individuals that come and go and appear to only want to take from the group, it's no surprise the value a network marketer brings to a chapter is usually not regarded as very high at the outset.

This brings us to the members' attitude about network marketing as an industry. The entrepreneurial nature of this group makes them more observant and curious about business models. As a result, there is a good chance they have dabbled in the industry in the past, so their results will likely impact their attitudes. They will also have their experiences with other network marketers and network marketing companies as a point of comparison.

The consistency of those people and companies is now impacting your future success.

This could work for you, but in most cases, it will probably work against you, since more people fail in the industry than are successful.

Business networkers are normally a group where you don't have to beat too much around the bush about how they feel about the industry. Many business owners fall into a director personality style that prefers bottom-line communication. It's normally pretty easy to come right out and ask how they feel and get a quick response. I would encourage you to do so when you are talking with members outside the meeting to know where your potential battles lie.

Finally, let's review your credibility in relation to your success in the network marketing industry and as a representative of your product and/or service's general industry.

Credibility on these two levels is the area where there is generally the largest degree of inconsistency as viewed by the networking group.

Starting a traditional business normally requires a degree of specialized knowledge and success in that field and potentially also in business management. Contrast this level of experience and success to a part-time network marketer that hasn't even sponsored their first person that comes into a meeting and talks about how they're going to solve everyone's financial and business woes with their exciting product and opportunity.

Then there's the question of whether you are even a good representative for your industry. Do you look the part of someone in that role? I remember one man that was selling financial services that came to a

meeting with an un-tucked shirt, out-of-date tie, two days of stubble and hollow earrings. He certainly didn't instill confidence in me that he was the person to follow for financial decisions. My other favorites are the people that sell health and wellness products that turn around and smoke or eat excessive amounts of unhealthy food while visiting the meeting. These inconsistencies erode any credibility that people have in network marketers in general.

With all of that being said, I have met a number of network marketers that have been able to consistently use networking as their marketing vehicle of choice. Here are just a few notes on how they were able to accomplish this success so you can be more effective personally.

1. Your climb to respect is probably going to take longer and be harder. Make sure you go in realizing this channel will take some time to produce fruit and commit to being consistent in your attendance and participation in the group. Do whatever you can to get endorsements as quickly as possible about your character, leadership skills and dependability. These may be easier if you don't have any customers in the group. Product testimonials from members will also help shorten the curve.

2. Realize that you will have to put wood in the stove before you can get a fire. In other words, go out of your way to make qualified, bonafide introductions to other members for the customers and/or vendors they request. Since you can talk to just about anyone about a network marketing business, pick 1-2 groups of people to approach each week and cold call at least 3-5 people in an arena that would benefit one of the members of your group so you will seen as someone that consistently passes referrals and is looking to make a contribution.

3. Align yourself with other people that sell direct to consumers or are in business-to-business (B2B) to match the nature of your products and/or services. That group will produce probably two-thirds of your referrals.

4. Depending on the structure and nature of the group, consistently bring lots of guests. Each guest represents another 250 people for each member of your chapter. This helps to increase your value to the group.

The relationship rule for referrals (no relationship = no referral) is second only to this other law of referrals:

> ***To get referrals, your business has to be worthy of being referred.***

If you have that element down, be consistent with your behaviors to help change any negative attitudes in a group toward network marketing and your products or service.

If you would like to get a deeper insight into business networking and how to shorten the acceptance curve in your current group or to find a better group elsewhere, then call 770-912-8774 or email John directly at John@HollnerPromos.com about our new program: Generating MLM Leads from Business Networking Groups.

John Hollner owns and operations Hollner Promotions, where he helps business owners and career professionals ask better, smarter questions to maximize their investments of time, energy and money in their work. Around the direct sales industry for over 12 years, as both a team builder and working on staff with several generic MLM trainers, he has some unique insights into the problems in the field and how several successful people have navigated through them. He has recently completed a comprehensive Internet research course for MLM reps to help them grow their business without draining their bank account. For more details, visit

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Call our offices at 770-912-8774 to get a complete schedule of trainings and product offerings for Internet research programs or send an email to john@hollnerpromos.com for more information on effective Internet research, including links to important research sites to see how this might be the key to unlocking your business success.