

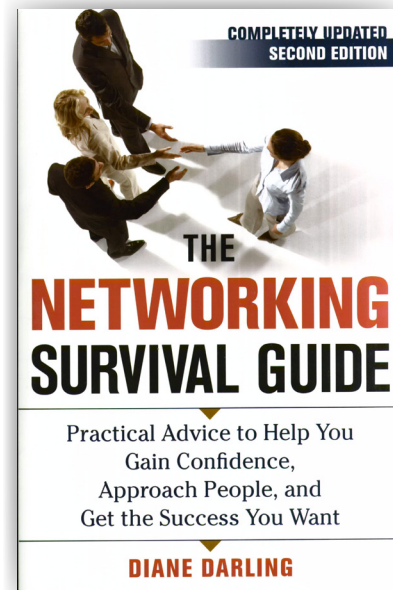


The Networking Survival Guide

Practical Advice to Help You Gain Confidence, Approach People, and Get the Success You Want

Diane Darling

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ISBN: 978-0-07-171758-8



INTRODUCTION

Networking is more than just shaking hands and taking a business card. If done correctly, it can open doors and close deals. If done incorrectly, it can be a complete waste of time. Introvert, extrovert, novice or ace; everyone can learn something from **The Networking Survival Guide**, written by Diane Darling.

This book is designed to bring clarity to the chaos by focusing on two facets of networking: 1) *The Outside* or the skills which can be learned with some training and practice and 2) *The Inside* or the connection one feels towards others when networking occurs, and possible reasons why many are hesitant to network.

NETWORKING BASICS

The core element of networking is doing for others. No one wants to form a relationship with someone

who is only looking to benefit themselves. The key is to build a network of people before any favors are needed. Networking is not selling, asking for a job, soliciting a donation, or securing funding. It is referring a service, suggesting a restaurant, picking up a neighbor's mail, answering an email, returning a phone call, bringing a cup of soup to a sick friend, or joining a non-profit board.

Networking is an activity, hence the "ing." It requires active participation to be effective. The goal is to find a group of people who want to see each other succeed, both professionally and personally. They share knowledge, ideas and are willing to lend a hand. It is all about building the relationships before one needs them. After that, asking for help takes only a phone call. Everyone gets more done with less effort.

Marketing, Networking, and Selling are interdependent upon each other; without the other two, one is less productive.

- *Marketing* educates the target market and creates awareness.
- *Networking* connects people who can solve problems for each other.
- *Selling* fills a need.

This powerful trio works when all the pieces are played in order. It may be tempting to skip a step or two to get directly to the desired end result, the sale. This leads to one feeling like they are being sold. It is much easier when the target market is already aware of the services being offered and has received a referral from a trusted source. By the time the client gets to the buy stage, the due diligence period is over and the decision is made. No hard selling required.

Networking is often confused with schmoozing. Schmoosers are superficial and are only looking for how quickly they can benefit. Typically they are only heard from when they need something. Networking is relationship based and is mutually beneficial. While it need not be constant, when the need arises the connection is there.

Time is precious and tough decisions are required. Make time for those:

- who make time for you
- who leave you feeling positive, energized and worthy
- who offer value
- from whom you can derive benefits

Send anyone who falls outside these areas to the acquaintance network. While they are not completely brushed-off, they do not deserve the time and energy required for those within the true network.

PREPARING TO NETWORK

The key to building a relationship is to give first before seeking to receive. The first step in preparing to network is to engage in casual conversation with complete strangers. The book provides several exercises to help the reader practice being friendly. One suggestion is to make eye contact and smile at a minimum of two unfamiliar people each day. There

KEY CONCEPTS

The Networking Survival Guide by Diane Darling is a book that takes the mystery out of how to network successfully:

- **Networking is not about what you get out of it.** The key to obtaining optimal results is to first find out how you can help the other person. Focus on building the relationship first before you look to benefit yourself.
- **Networking is a learned skill.** While many may intuitively know how to network, to be truly effective you must receive proper training. Practice makes perfect.
- **Be prepared to network.** Do your research and pack your survival bag. These small steps build confidence, fuel conversation, and save time.
- **Look for introductions.** Grow and maintain your network by introducing people who are a natural fit. Ask for an introduction to reduce awkwardness of meeting someone new.
- **Network everywhere.** Networking happens at work, in a shared taxi cab... it can happen anywhere. Always carry your business cards and take advantage when an opportunity presents itself.



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are follow up questions and suggestions to allow one to further explore the results of the exercise and gain improvement.

Online networking makes some of those exercises easier. The author suggests Meetup.com and Yahoo groups, but cautions to attend the first group activity at a public venue and/or bring a friend for safety reasons. She ends with a brief description of the three major online networking tools (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter). Regardless of the networking avenue chosen, one must have a plan with goals which are clear, flexible and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed).

When you have identified and organized your networks, it's easier to find the right person for the right problem.

Whatever the main networking goal, (raising capital, business or professional development, etc.) the networker must be open to change in case things are not what they expected. Map out the journey beforehand to save time, energy, and money.

Determine the type of people you want added to your networks. While everyone wants to have thousands of contacts, focus on quality not quantity. An online network typically does not hold the power a traditional network does, unless you provide highly regarded content or services. Any content produced –

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Darling considers herself a friendly, functional introvert. While she is adept at being at a cocktail party, she does not look forward to it. She developed her skills as a child by living in several countries and by just being curious. She prefers to network through writing, being a speaker and by connecting with people.

Most recently she was the keynote speaker at MIT Charm School. She has worked with a variety of corporations, nonprofits, universities and government agencies. She has been featured on NBC Nightly News, in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *International Herald Tribune* just to name a few. She is based in Boston, MA.

blogs, posts, links to useful articles, etc – must deliver a grand first impression to clear the way for a deeper relationship.

To inventory your network, go through your contacts to find ways in which to connect people, unknown to each other, within that network. Send both an email explaining how they connect (hobby, job, education, etc) and provide a way for them to meet each other. Making the effort establishes yourself as a valuable “go-to” person to solve problems.

While there is value in cross-networking, take care and be sensitive to not match anyone with strong, opposing political or religious views.

Next, evaluate each contact within the network. Is this person key to achieving one’s goal? Do they return phone calls within 48 hours? Being in a network is not a popularity contest. It is about building a group of people who can be counted upon and vice versa.

Next, evaluate every company you are affiliated with. Did the company help earn new clients, refer someone to fill a vacant position, introduce a new supplier? Is there a key individual inside the company or organization? Are other relationships in place if that person was to leave? When evaluating organizations you volunteer with, evaluate your role within the group. What value does being a member bring? How much time does it take? Does being involved evoke energy or dread?

To focus on evaluating the people within those companies and organizations, ask three questions:

1. Will they will call back within a week.
2. What can the networker offer that person?
3. What can that person offer the networker?

The next step is to rank clients based on revenue or profitability. Create a business profile for the top and bottom 5%. From the bottom five percent, list those businesses that have people you genuinely like. Do the same with the top five percent. Evaluate why they

are likable, how to make them more successful, and who they can be introduced to.

Contact Strategy Template

1. *Prepare* – create a bullet outline including why the person is being contacted and what one wants in return. For example:

- Calling Jack Jones
- Want introduction for Ms. Smith @ Smith and Assoc.

Networking gives you ways to stay in touch and helps you discover who those people in your life are. This is not a popularity contest like high school. This is not just about people we like; it's more than that. It's about people we can get help from when we need it and vice versa.

- Would like to provide legal services
 - Expertise in mergers can help her grow the company
2. Email and call for a meeting – doing both feels more personal.
 3. Let them know why they are being contacted.
 4. Set the meeting at a time that is best for them.
 5. Pick up the tab for any expenses.
 6. At the meeting, do the following:
 - Be very specific.
 - Create an atmosphere in which they can say no.
 - Tell them what is in it for them.
 7. Afterwards:
 - Send an email or paper thank you within 48 hours.
 - Keep the person updated on progress.
 - Ask what can be done for them.
 8. Repeat above steps for each contact.

To make the best use of time, prioritize those contacts that you have the most in common with. Reorganize rather than eliminate the remaining contacts. When practicing networking skills, stay away from the top

five percent. The goal is practice, and one should not be practicing on top clients.

Pay attention to the little things: appropriate attire, a proper handshake, good manners and saying thank you. Taking care of the little things keeps the focus on the big things. Consider using the following to help make a winning first impression: Wardrobe/Image Consultant, Hair Stylist, Dining Etiquette Classes, Manners Coach, Personal Trainer, Presentation Coach, Acting Class, Business Writing, Dentist, and Networking Coach.

Take classes to build on business skills and better manage one's career path: Management Training, Leadership, Sales Coach, Hiring and Firing Skills, Conflict Resolution and Stress Management, Meeting Management, Time

and Project Management, Right Brain or Left Brain Building Activities (if one is more analytical, take an art class...etc), and Communications. You might also consider hiring a Career Coach.

Build a Personal Board of Advisors, a team of five or six people, who are liked, known, and trusted.

- *Politician or Mentor* – Someone who has an interest and desire to see one succeed and has the time to help.
- *Strategist* – sees what is needed to realize the future and creates a map to get there.
- *Problem Solver* – Has experience in overcoming challenges and can offer techniques for moving on to the next step.
- *Coach* – can help determine what is holding one back.
- *Butt Kicker* – Holds one accountable and challenges negative thinking.
- *Cheerleader* – A positive person with a glass half-full perspective.

Discuss expectations and “term limits” clearly. Identify specific goals and ways this person can help.

Create a Peer Group with other professionals in comparable positions in other companies. Keep it limited to about 12 people. This group can become invaluable

as it allows discussion of matters that cannot be discussed with the Personal Board of Advisors.

Find a Networking Buddy. This person is not a competitor, but offers services to a similar target market. Choose someone who enjoys networking during the same time of day and can be completely trusted. The value of this buddy is dependent upon the time invested in the relationship. In shared professional circles, each party represents the other. They can arrive at events together, make introductions, and then split up. After a while, assess the value of continuing and leave if the event is not worthwhile.

Creating a “Whether Report” is a way to determine whether or not one should attend an event, contact someone, or join an organization. A basic online search to find reviews is a good place to start. Review contacts and see if anyone is familiar with an organization or event and get their feedback. Search LinkedIn and Facebook to see if anyone of interest is a member of the organization or shares similar interests. Investigate the host organization, the attendees, the speaker, the sponsors, the industry, the logistics (day, time, price, parking, etc), the weather, who was the invitee, and what the ultimate goal would be. After reviewing all these separately, you can clearly judge if the event is worth your time. This whether report can be readjusted to analyze membership in a specific organization or if a particular contact is worth pursuing. The book offers a thorough breakdown of each report and provides numerous examples for added clarification.

After completing the whether report, an additional step is necessary—qualify the networking event. Time is valuable and if one must be away from the office or the family, the event needs to be worthwhile. Ask yourself what the main reason is for going. The answer should fall into one of three reasons:

1. Connecting with colleagues
2. Business opportunities
3. Personal growth

By taking the time to prequalify an event, it is more likely to be a successful experience.

NETWORKING TECHNIQUES

In order to be successful at networking, you must have the appropriate tools. Top on this list is the business card—always carry them, but make sure the cards leave the right impression. A good card is free of errors, contains an email address and a telephone number, has plenty of white space, is on 80-pound strength and 14-point thickness, and uses a minimum 10 point font. Refrain from using folded cards and if the backside has print, leave some room for notes.

Respect your cards and put them in a case. They are your image when you are not around.

When to hand out a card:

- At meetings: In the beginning before it starts.
- Networking event: After the conversation is over.
- Ask for a card and mention intentions to follow up, while observing body language.
- Give a card when asked and never walk up to people and start handing out cards.
- Give only one card, any additional usually get thrown away.

The leave behind card is given in addition to the business card. It is a card full of fun facts or interesting information about you or your business. It usually starts a conversation and leaves an impression.

Use two card cases: one to carry your card and one to carry the cards you receive. Keep an adequate supply of cards on hand at all times.

After the event, it is time to process the cards and store them. When you are initially given the card, look at it and try to make a connection between the card and the person. Make notes on the card of anything promised. Be sure to follow up within five to seven days with any promised item. Determine which cards to keep and who to follow up on. Store the cards either electronically or in a manual filing system.

Other networking accessories include a notepad and pen, a functional briefcase, and an ability to silence any electronic item carried.

Body language, voice, tone and pitch account for 93 percent of communication. This is why misunder-

standings are more common in the age of text and email. To give the best impression using body language, maintain 18 inches of personal space, do not slouch, keep your shoulders and hips parallel, smile, maintain eye contact, and keep your hands out of pockets.

In business, it is essential to get someone's attention first in order to continue and potentially do business together. How you are perceived in a discussion affects how you will be judged professionally.

Practice saying your name like a statement. Inject energy and enthusiasm into your everyday voice. Try smiling and consider standing up before answering the phone. Take control of the conversation by either slowing down or picking up the pace. Consult your Networking Buddy to ensure that you are not mumbling or talking too softly.

Use a vocabulary level appropriate for the audience. Avoid acronyms and industry jargon unless you are speaking to people who also use them. Avoid alienating your listeners by using sports analogies, slang, vulgarity, or clichés. Speak in complete sentences and use proper grammar. For immediate feedback, videotape and evaluate yourself speak.

Being able to engage in a pleasant conversation strengthens self-confidence and makes you memorable. Completing the research discussed earlier makes a difference in creating good conversation. Knowing ahead of time any mutual acquaintances or shared interests can fill the void after the initial introductions are made. It is also useful to memorize three neutral questions:

- "Tell me how you know the host, company, organization, etc?"
- "What made you decide to come?"
- "What other organizations do you belong to?"

Become familiar with some neutral topics to help fuel the conversation, such as the local sports team, the business you are in, movies, books, and sports. Be observant of what is going on around you. Are there any special attractions, a park, or something similar in the area?

To continually fill your networking repertoire, spend 15 minutes reading the newspaper every day. Quickly skim the headlines and watch the local and national news channels. Read three popular magazine covers: news (Time or Newsweek), business (BusinessWeek, Fortune or Forbes), and general interest (People). Be aware of what is happening in the business world.

Conversations are best started with a smile and an outstretched hand. Keep the conversation simple and neutral. Your purpose is to make the other person feel important. If you are nervous, you are thinking too much about yourself.

Practice good listening skills by making eye contact and facing the person. Avoid talking negatively about anything or anyone, and attempt to redirect any conversation which brings up religion or politics. Limit the conversation to three to five minutes and leave before being left.

There are many other opportunities for networking other than specific events. Take 15 minutes each week and invite a different co-worker to coffee. Planes and trains are common areas, but respect fellow travelers. Pay attention to body language or any other signs they wish to be left alone.

Before attending any conference or tradeshow, do your research first. Learn who the speakers are, what vendors are going to be there, and where they are located. Book a table for 20 at a local restaurant and invite new acquaintances to dinner. To avoid paying for everyone, mention the price of the average item on the menu. Let the server know in advance everyone is paying individually, but be prepared to tip well for that service.

Job fairs and meetings are also great networking opportunities. Again, it is important to do some research first to find out who is attending. Have pen and paper to take notes and come prepared with business cards.

A good introduction is brief (5 to 10 seconds) and invites conversation. It should include three things:

1. How you fit into the situation.
2. Your name

3. Why the other person should care

Example: "I am an exhibitor at this show from People Technology, my name is Susan Smith, and we help companies find the right people for their technology positions."

Practice until it becomes automatic. You want your introduction to create a response. If it shuts down the conversation, it needs more work.

Be polite and have manners at all times. While it may not be directly commented upon, it is noticed and appreciated. Continually practice until you are able to teach someone else. It increases your confidence to know how to act in every circumstance.

NETWORKING SURVIVAL

It is important to wear clothes that make you feel confident and helps others to easily describe you. Men should wear a tie with a complimentary design and women should wear a suit in a color other than navy, brown or black.

Always carry the Networking Survival Kit with you. It contains business cards, two business card cases, pen, 3 x 5 note cards, sharpie marker (for your name badge), breath mints, directions to the event, printout of the front page of the hosting organization's website, and the staff and board members of the organization. If for a meeting, add a portfolio for taking notes.

For the office and/or the car, have a small survival kit filled with toiletries. Some necessary items include toothbrush and paste, hand lotion, nail file and clippers, comb and/or brush, hair spray, lint roller, shaving kit or cosmetics, tissues, moist towelettes, mints, safety pins, and a sewing kit.

Place your name badge high on your right shoulder. Write your name using a sharpie for easier reading. If gutsy, add something memorable. An example: "Dan, the Dr. Phil of Business Banking."

It is important for both men and women to have a firm and confident handshake. The webbing in between the thumb and first finger of each person should touch. The palms should touch lightly, avoid cupping. Shake

up and down slightly, hold for a moment and then let go. Maintain eye contact throughout the handshake and the introduction. As a sign of confidence and equality in the business world, ladies should extend their hands first.

At the event, focus on the event, not the food. Avoid carrying beverages and hors d'oeuvres. Consider snacking before arriving at the event to avoid being hungry. When carrying a glass, do so in your left hand to avoid a clammy handshake. Limit alcohol drinks to two and drink water in between. Never drink from a can.

Make it your goal to meet people who you can add value to, and vice versa. If you are looking to meet the speaker or a VIP attending, do so before the presentation. If you are looking to meet someone else, find someone who can make an introduction. In conversation, remember to ask what you can do for people, it builds rapport.

Afterwards, do not forget to follow up. When others follow up, return their call even if the answers to their questions are not available. Be a professional who treats everyone with respect.

You want people to remember you, not your handshake. Your handshake is one of the most important communication tools you have. Use it to your advantage.

How you follow up depends on the urgency involved. If you find yourself moving quickly into sales mode, consider sending an express package with contracts or an email with pertinent information. If following up from networking (to say thank you or to stay in touch), ask the person when taking their card how they prefer to be contacted. Use voicemail when the tone of voice is important to smooth over a misunderstanding or express energy and excitement. You can never go wrong with regular mail. Dropping a note in the mail can help you stand out from the masses and sends the message that you are thoughtful.

When extending an invitation to lunch, be clear about your intentions and pick up the bill. It is sometimes easier, and cheaper, to bring coffee to their office and chat. Whichever situation, be flexible and open to rejection. If someone feels comfortable saying no, they

will respect you and remember you in the future.

If someone that you have been introduced to is not returning your phone calls, keep the person who made the introduction in the loop. Ask their advice for next steps and keep that person updated. Introduced or not, discontinue contacting them after three attempts.

“Coffee dates” involve less of a time commitment and are seen as less intrusive than a lunch meeting. Plus there’s less risk of having a conversation with a valuable contact with a sesame seed stuck in your teeth!

Online networking is growing in popularity and there are three major sites: LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. There are three keys to effectively using these online networking services: Research (people and companies), Personal Branding (how you want others to see you) and Networking.

Online participation varies greatly depending upon age and experience. The younger the person, the more likely they are to have a strong online presence. Regardless, everyone should be familiar with the different online communities or risk missing out on some valuable opportunities. Whichever online venue used, be professional at all times.

When sending email, make your name visible to the receiver (this is done through email software). The subject line is like the headline of a newspaper article—it gives the receiver a reason to open your email and read it. Use “cc” only if everyone receiving the email knows each other, otherwise use “bcc.” When replying back and forth, change the subject line to reflect new topics. Create a signature to appear at the bottom of every email. Always use proper grammar and if there is a risk of misinterpretation, make a phone appointment instead.

To become more visible to peers, colleagues, competitors, vendors, etc., it is crucial to become actively involved in a professional association for career advancement. Consider attending a new organization or meeting once per month to find a group that fits you and your goals best.

Other ways to grow your network include alumni

groups, volunteering opportunities, writing and speaking opportunities, serving on a corporate or non-profit board, and cause-related marketing campaigns.

Be ethical in all of your networking dealings. Use only the names of people who have given you permission to do so. When in doubt, underplay your connection.

Do not mislead anyone regarding endorsements. If an endorsement is necessary, get an email or letter of introduction from that person. Avoid overstating the depth of your relationship.

Sometimes we do not feel like networking. At these times it is important to ask yourself why. It may be because you are tired, have worked too many hours, or the location is not convenient. In those moments it is a good idea to examine the value in attending. Avoid not attending for fear-based reasons (concerned about not knowing anyone, not fitting in, etc). Doing so can erode your confidence and only perpetuates the problem.

When going is necessary and you are struggling, there are some things you can do to get yourself excited. Attend the event with a buddy, arrive a little bit early, focus on thinking about what you can do for others, practice a couple of jokes, and wear something that makes you feel great. Since networking does not immediately produce value, it is easy to avoid going.

In the case of nervousness,, here are two exercises to perform for relaxation. Start by out stretching your legs, closing your eyes and tensing up your upper body for 10 seconds. Relax and take a deep breath. Repeat tensing up and turn your head to either side and pull it down gently. Deep breath again, tense up and this time point your toes forward. Relax.

For the next exercise, sit up straight, close your eyes and place your hands at your sides. Take a deep breath for a count of four, hold for four seconds, and exhale slowly for four seconds. Do this three times.

The key to networking is practice. Be patient with yourself as you begin to network. Over time you will perfect your skills and you will have met many new and fascinating people in the process. Focus on just

saying hello and asking what you can do for that person. Happy Networking!



FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Reading Time: 4-6 hours, 249 pages

The Networking Survival Guide is a book that takes the mystery out of how to network successfully. It contains many examples and best practices for everyone from the employee seeking to get ahead to the business owner looking for new clients. In addition to the clear and practical advice, there are diagrams, examples, exercises and personal stories. This book is designed to be read from front to back as there are references to earlier introduced material. It is likely anyone who reads the book will keep it as a part of their reference library to be looked at again and again.

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