

NETWORKING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

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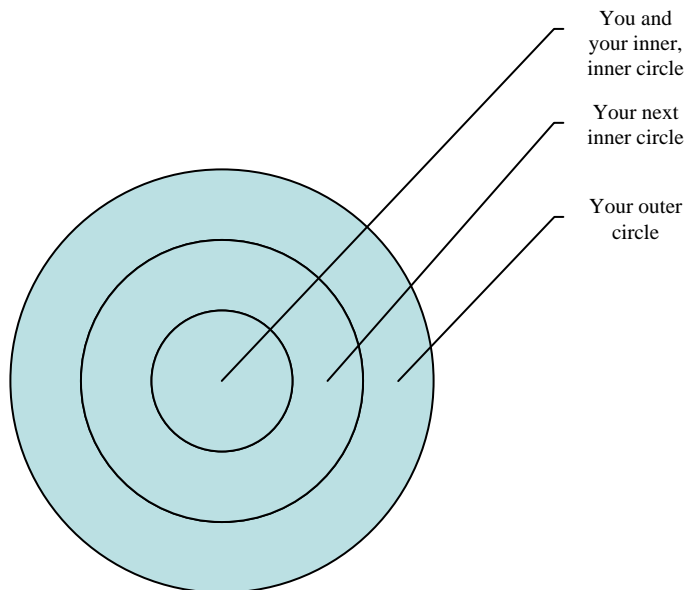
The problem with Networking for Attorneys is that most lawyers love to talk and talk and talk and the first rule of Networking is to listen and listen and listen. When you do talk, you only give the person information they can process and understand. Speaking of your past affairs, your problem with gingivitis or your current trauma with the IRS is not conducive to communicating who you are and what you do. Listening to what they do or who they are, on the other hand, gives you deep insights into how to communicate with them.

THINKING ABOUT NETWORKING

To begin, first think about networking as a circle with you in the middle. There is a very small inner ring just around you that contains all the people and clients who support you and know what kind of business you are looking for..

The second circle is a bit bigger and holds all the people you have meet in law school but not kept in regular contact with, your distant family, the guy or gal whose card you got at a recent Bar function and other people who know what you do but are not particularly close to you on a business level.

The last circle which is far away from you in the center consists of all the people you come in contact with but who may know you as their client or acquaintance but who doesn't have a clue as to what you really do as a lawyer. This could be your hairdresser, cleaners, dentist, doctor, housekeeper and on and on.



DATABASE

The idea is to create your database with names, addresses, etc. of all of the people who you know...then to separate them into the proper circles. If you have Outlook, this is easily done with the categories. Some people, you will find may float back and forth between these circles and some people are just dear friends and will never make it into the inner circle, although you will continue to maintain a deep personal relationship.

It's important to keep your database up to date and have easy access to emails. In this way, you can easily do an e-blast to your inner, inner circle frequently, to your other circles less frequently. The goal should be to "touch" your inner, inner circle every three to four months, your inner circle twice a year and your outer circle once a year. This can easily be done by way of a Holiday Greeting, A Birthday Card and two other announcements or newsletters. The inner circle only gets the Holiday Greeting and Birthday Card and the outer circle only the Holiday Greeting.

MEETINGS

For those of us who are not extroverts, this can be anxiety producing so let's take care of that upfront. Unfortunately, you have to meet people in order to find out about them. This is your real goal, not them finding out about you. For most of us it is most comfortable to walk into a room full of friends. In this way, we don't have to be afraid we will do something wrong or not be "cool" enough. There are two lines which can open up any successful conversation at any meeting. Be my guest in using them....

"Hi, I'm _____ what do you think of this event (party, class, meeting)?"

Or

"What brings you here today (tonight, this morning)? and by the way I'm_____"

These are open ended questions which require some communication, but also give you a very non threatening approach to strangers with something in common (the event).

Always give the person your business card. By the way, your business card should never, never be plain white with black printing....boring. Your business card can be very classy but it should say what kind of law you practice and your name and phone number should be in bold. This helps people remember you. Also always carry a pocket of Godiva chocolates. People will remember you if you give them something sweet. You might do this at the end of the conversation.

Women can wear a piece of funky jewelry which can also be a conversation piece. I used to have a car pin with diamond (fake) headlights when I was doing personal injury law. If you do real estate, a house pin is nice and family law can be a pin with a lot of children hooked together. Keep your eyes open.

ELEVATOR SPEECH

This is your 20-30 second introduction which answers the question “and what do you do?” This comes from your Mission Statement and needs to be practiced daily so you are very clear. Remember your goal is to get across exactly what kind of law you practice so that the person really understands what you do. Also you need to tell them how you are different than every other lawyer in your field. You may have a different elevator speech for attorneys as opposed to lay people.

Also be ready to answer the question “and what kind of people should I refer to you”. You won’t always get that questions so directly but it is often easy to slip the answer in the conversation anyway. This is also a great question to ask the people you are meeting. It shows you are interested in their business.

USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Remember you sell your time, so it is precious. Don’t give it away by coming too late to talk with the attendees or leaving early before you can make contacts. If you see there is very little time for schmoosing (like at a class) you may want to pick two or three people who look interesting, get their cards and give them a call later.

Unlike true social events, business meetings and classes usually have a networking expectation about them. There is usually an assumption that business cards will be exchanged and conversation will be about business. Of course, there is no law against networking at a social event but this has to be done carefully so you’re not alienating your precious relationships because they find you too pushy or all one sided in your conversation.