

# Business Cards Are Not Your Customers

*Planning on attending a networking event? Learn how to make it count.*

Chamber networking events. Some people look forward to them, others may secretly groan when they show up on the schedule. The long and the short of it is: if you're going to attend, make them count. The key is to have a plan before you even leave the office.

- **Set a goal** of how many new contacts and how many previous acquaintances you will make contact with. This keeps you on track to maximize the opportunity.
- **Determine how and when you will follow up** with people after the event.
- **Bring extra** business cards. (Of course.)
- **Gathering cards is more important than handing out cards.** Someone doesn't have cards? Jot their info on one of yours.
- Keep a permanent marker with you and **jot down what you talked about and your next step** (pens don't write well on business cards).
- **Tell people that you will follow up** (and then do). Then they will be more receptive to hearing from you. Plus, you'll be more apt to do it because you said you would.
- As soon as you leave the event, take a moment to **sort through the business cards you collected**; rank and categorize them by how they fit into your network and how you can help one another.
- Don't just leave the cards you gathered on your desk. **Enter them into your database** and schedule contact dates in your calendar.
- **Add each new contact** to your LinkedIn network.
- **Follow up** with a quick email or phone call within 24-48 hours. Schedule this on your calendar. Seriously, set aside the time and make yourself do it. Remember, you told them you would.
- **Share a resource with them**—something helpful (e.g. a blog, article, book suggestion, or person they should connect with)—not a sales piece. Give first and expect nothing in return.
- **Make it personal**, "It was great meeting you at the Chamber event yesterday. Enjoy your family reunion this weekend."
- Following up once may not work. **Touch base on a regular basis.** You're simply staying connected. Next time you see them, they'll (hopefully) remember you.
- **Subscribe to newsle.com** and send a congratulations every time one of your contacts pops up.
- **Invite your new contact to another networking event** you will attending. This is a great way to interact with more of your contacts face-to-face.

**Continue to give and don't expect reciprocity** – it will come on its own. When you're connecting with someone, you're communicating with their network. **The idea is to keep your name and what you do at the top of their minds.** Your product or service doesn't have to apply to them, use the strength of that one connection to open many doors.

Networking is part of business growth, and **two important aspects go hand-in-hand**:

1) You're creating awareness of your brand and your existence. 2) You must capitalize on that awareness through follow up. **To put it bluntly, without follow-up, you've wasted the opportunity.**

