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Networking: It's All About Building **RELATIONSHIPS**

By Cris Canning, CMP

Networking is all about relationships. It is *not* about collecting business cards or prospecting for clients. Here are a few networking techniques and truths I employ in my personal relationships that have helped me in nurturing professional relationships.

AS A FRIEND

- If you focus on making a friend first, then the business will come.
- Greet everyone you meet as if they were an old friend and embrace them equally.
- Don't ask for anything except advice or an opinion.
- Be prepared to help as well as be helped; it's not always about us.
- It's about what you give, not what you get. You can expect to get back tenfold what you give, both personally and professionally.
- As you build a relationship, try to find out the special dates in someone's life and then celebrate them.

AS A CONFIDANTE

- People start conversations to help, learn, relate, influence or play.
- No one cares how much you know until they see how much you care.
- Establish rapport by asking a question like "What do you like most about your job?" Look for a common point of interest.
- Set your ego aside and give up your need to control the conversation. The way you listen is the way you connect.
- Nothing builds trust and credibility with a person better than selflessly helping them with a problem.
- Networking is a reciprocal process. Be generous and share ideas, thoughts, support, time and laughter with others.

AS A HOST

- In any situation, play the role of host and act as though everyone is an honored guest.

- Seek out the person who looks uncomfortable and begin a conversation.
- Play matchmaker and introduce others.
- Take time for pleasantries.
- When you meet someone, listen for ways you can help him or her.
- We don't often remember what people do or say, but rather how they make us feel.
- The best hosts (and networkers) refer, recommend and bring people together.

AS A TEACHER

- Networking is more about teaching and giving than about talking and taking.
- Information is power, so share it generously by sending articles, booklets, etc.
- Become a resource for others. Share your knowledge unselfishly and contribute to the success of others.
- Character and competence are two of the most important traits people look for in a personal and business relationship.
- Remember that only 7 percent of our communication is verbal, so walk your talk and watch your body language.

Savvy networkers see opportunities others miss to build relationships that are beneficial to everyone. Thus, networking is a valuable skill for everyone and is not just the forte of suppliers. §



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