

# The 5 Habits of Highly Effective Networkers

Our thanks to [Michel Theriault](#)



Some people think networking is only useful for finding clients or landing a new job.

In fact, an often overlooked benefit of networking is the opportunity to learn from others and connect with people you can discuss new ideas with. If you are trying to solve a business or career problem, chances are that someone out there has already dealt with it and can offer you good advice. Even if they can't, simply discussing the issue with them may spark creative ideas.

In addition, when you need a service or product, those in your network may be able to suggest companies that they trust and have already worked with. Ask people for recommendations

and you will have plenty of companies to invite in to pitch that new product or service that you need. They might be able to give a contact to negotiate with directly.

*Here are some tips to help you to become a successful networker:*

## **1. Admit You Don't Have All the Answers**

The first thing you need to do is admit that you don't know everything. So instead of reinventing the wheel or trying to solve something the hard way, tap into your network.

I met someone who was having challenges with his business and who had expended a lot of effort trying to solve a problem with many different solutions and products, including employing different contractors to try different approaches.

I asked him whether he had spoken with colleagues in the industry who may have had the same issues and found a good solution. His answer was no. And yet they were just a phone call away!

## **2. Make Sure to Give Rather Than Just Take**

You may find that you meet with resistance from industry colleagues who are as busy as you or who don't always recognise the benefits of networking. That's why you build your network *before* you need something from them. Give first so that it is easier to get help, or advice, when you need it.

Pass along useful solutions that you have learned, or read about, to the people within your network. The next time you meet or contact members of your network, see if there is anything useful that you can help them with. When the time

comes when it is you that is looking for advice or help, they will be more likely to spend the time to help you. It is a proven fact that most people like to help others, it is in our DNA, and the feeling of well-being that comes from helping is what drives us to do so.

### **3. Network With Your Competitors**

Even if you are in organisations that compete, it is often in your organisation's best interest to work with others in the same industry, rather than keeping your distance. You can help each other reduce costs, find service providers and suppliers, or solve issues in ways that are not at each other's expense. And they don't have to be local to you. You can network over the phone just as effectively as in person; in fact, a phone conversation is often easier than trying to set up a formal meeting. If they are further away, they are less likely to be concerned about sharing information with you, since you may not be competing in the same marketplace.

### **4. Utilise Your Business Association**

Industry associations exist to advance the industry and help members advance their careers. When you need to find solutions, or get advice about issues and problems, you might be having, your industry association can be an excellent resource.

Hopefully you have built your network already, but if you have an issue or problem that nobody in your current network can solve, call your association and ask if they can recommend someone or pass your request along to another member. If you have access to the member directory, use it to find a person you think might be able to help you based on their location, title, etc.

## **5. Keep Your Networking Human**

When you are at conferences, find people you think can, or will be able to, add value to your network (but remember you should be able to offer them value as well) and be sure to follow up after the event via email, LinkedIn, or phone.

So, the next time you think about networking play the long game, don't suddenly become an active networker when you need another job or are looking for new clients. Think of it as the ongoing practice of sharing information and knowledge for everyone's benefit. Your business network will not all be friends, but approach networking in the same way you do your circle of friends, be there for them and call for help when you need it. And just like with your friends the more you are in touch the easier it is to talk to them.