

Competitors into Profits - Lesson 5

IN-PERSON NETWORKING



In Person Networking to Grow Your Connections

This lesson is all about really getting out there, literally getting out there. It's not always in our comfort zones, but it's well worth the effort. There is nothing quite like face to face contact for growing your relationships.

In-person networking can take place in a number of different ways. It could be a local Meetup of business owners in your area, a seminar across the country, an expo event or just about anything that gets you out of the house and meeting your fellow online business owners.

The advice shared in this lesson may go against a lot of traditional networking advice you have heard. When you're connecting with other online business owners, consider that we're a different breed than traditional brick and mortar business owners. We're generally more casual and often introverted. We're certainly profit-driven, but most of us who are doing well, put serving our online communities in a positive way on the same level as profits. We aren't just interested in making a buck... we're also interested in improving lives.

All this means you have to pay attention to other people and listen first. Don't be in a rush to form a working relationship until you understand what your connection really is.

Now before we continue let's look at those 3 things we always have to keep in mind.

Keep in Mind

- **Be Targeted:** Events can't always be targeted to your particular niche, but if you find something that is, you should definitely take advantage. Other ways to be targeted include looking for likeminded business owners in your area. Or, if there are events for "mom bloggers" or "affiliate marketers" and that fits what you do, those are great events to be a part of as well. Even so, general events for online business owners can provide great benefits as well.

No matter what type of event you attend, get out there and talk to as many people as possible. Don't worry about making a connection with all of them or fulfilling some type of quota... just be casual. After all, there are other benefits to making connections than just finding a way to work together. Share your knowledge and experiences. And seriously, just being able to connect with other online business owners who understand what it is you do can be priceless.

- **Be Prepared:** Once you've chosen your event, learn as much about it as possible. Find out about the learning and networking opportunities. Sometimes you have to sign up (or even pay extra) for certain networking opportunities, but it's often well worth it.

Try to learn about the people who are attending and you want to meet. Do some background research and look at what projects they're working on. They'll be impressed when you know your stuff.

- **Nurture:** One of the biggest mistakes people make with in-person networking is not following up. It's understandable though. We go with big intentions, but then we get busy when we return home. Don't just collect business cards, because they'll sit in your desk drawer somewhere. Instead, make a concrete plan. If you're going to interview someone, schedule the time. If you're going to do a guest blog post, commit to a date when you'll deliver it. Schedule it and you're more likely to follow through.

Now let's look briefly at a few types of events you might attend for your in-person networking.

Local Meetup:

There are many ways to find or arrange local meetups. The first, and the reason we've started spelling "meetup" as one word, is because of the site Meetup.com. You can use the site to look for local Meetups or even create your own.

Of course, if you're active in online groups and forums, you've probably discovered a few people living in your area who also work online. You can schedule a casual lunch with people in your area. It's a great way to share information and it also offers a feeling of belonging when you're with people who understand what you do.

If you don't know of people in your local area, it's probably time to step up the online networking a bit. Get involved in marketing forums or join some Facebook Groups. Pay attention where people are from and once you get to know some local people, ask if they know others.

Seminars:

Business seminars are a great way to combine learning and networking. You might find some in your local area, or you might have to travel distances to be a part of the right ones for you. They can be tremendously helpful in terms of expanding your knowledge and building your connections...but have a plan for action when you get home. We'll talk more about that in a bit.

If you're not sure about what other events you could attend, ask your friends. If you don't have online business owner friends yet, get out there and start connecting. This is important!

Expos:

There are a lot of larger events (like BlogWorld and others) that are more like expos. There are learning and networking opportunities, but these are generally very large events where your goal should be to meet vendors and other people who can help your online business.

It's tougher to get to know specific people at the larger events. However, there are people who love to attend these events, and they often make very valuable connections. If you see something that catches your eye, go for it. Be sure to do your research, so you know about the different specific learning and focused networking opportunities, and make sure you take advantage of them.

Other Events:

Certainly, the three types of events mentioned above don't cover everything. If there's an opportunity for you to meet face to face with other likeminded business owners, there's one thing you should do... and that's... just do it!

More Tips for You

- **Skip the business cards.** If you don't have business cards written up already, don't sweat it. Focus on talking to people and getting to know them. If you really want to keep the conversation going, you don't need a business card to share contact information. When you bring business cards, the focus often becomes the mere acts of giving yours out and collecting cards from others. That's not networking and relationship building.
- **Make friends first.** Focus on getting to know people and carrying on regular old conversations. Obviously, the focus will probably be on business conversation, but don't worry about what you could get out of a potential relationship... become friends first.
- **Plan to do a few events.** One event can make a big difference, but trying to get together with some of the same people a few times more in the near future can really solidify the relationships. Of course, keep your budget in mind and don't spend thousands of dollars travelling across the country just because you think you should. It should be profitable for you to do so. Be strategic and make a plan to have more face to face contact. And remember, local meetups are very inexpensive to do.
- **Connect others.** Don't just worry about the people you are going to meet. Make introductions when you think two people would definitely make a good connection with one another. When you connect others, they are most likely to help you make better connections as well.
- **Always stay in the event hotel.** If you're staying in a hotel down the road or a taxi cab away, it's harder to fully immerse yourself. Always find out the hotel information and book early, so you can be in the center of the action.
- **Split up.** If you go with a friend you know well, or your spouse, don't always hang out together. Split up and network separately so you can meet more people.
- **Make a plan.** If you want to continue talking to someone after the event, make a concrete plan to do so. Schedule an interview or write a blog post for them... do something that requires a commitment on both your parts so you are more likely to stick to the plan.
- **Don't overwhelm yourself.** Make every effort to be engaged in all aspects of the event, and don't hide in your hotel room because you'll regret it. That said, if you need a little quiet time to recharge then give yourself that, but get back out there as soon as you're ready. Overall, it's not a contest. You do want to meet as many people as possible, but you also want to take the time to nurture new and promising friendships.

- **Listen when learning.** If you're attending a seminar, don't get bogged down in taking too many notes during the session. If you're busy writing notes, you're not paying full attention. Instead, write down a few key ideas that apply to ***your*** business as you hear them. Then when you get home (or better yet, while you're in the airport and it's fresh in your mind), read through your notes and create an action plan based on those notes that are highly relevant to your business.
- **Think before you spend.** Many seminars will offer "Continuing Education" opportunities where the speaker will put together a great offer for their products and/or services... usually with a high price tag. Seminars do this as a way to earn money and to compensate their speakers who often speak for free.

Skilled speakers can get you all pumped up and convinced that you need to buy, but use your head first. Evaluate the offer more critically and decide if it's right for you. They use scarcity tactics to make you think you have to act quickly because it won't be offered again. Now sometimes you might not get the same deal if you wait. But the reality is if you decide, at a later date, that you really do need something, you can still get it.

In short, don't go into debt because you're excited and someone is promising you the moon. This is a business purchase, and like all purchases they need to be carefully evaluated before being made. None of the purchases you make will be magic pills. There will always be hard work and probably more money to implement what is promised... so only do it if you're prepared.

The key here is to get out there and have fun... learning the whole way through. Be a friend first, and everything else will fall into place.

What to Do Now?

Here's what you can do with this lesson and if it means going outside your comfort zone, you must push yourself.

You could either:

1. **Organize or join a local Meetup.** Set a time, date and place... and show up. A Meetup organization checklist has been included with this lesson. Or look to see if there is a scheduled Meetup that you can join.
2. **Find a seminar or expo to attend.** Register and book your flight and hotel (if applicable). And, of course, show up. Checklists for finding the right event and getting prepared have been included in this lesson.
3. **If you're really ambitious, create your own seminar or expo.** There is a lot involved with the preparation, but if you want to connect a certain group of people and share networking and education opportunities, it might very well be worth it.

Get Feedback

Here are some things you might ask for help with in this lesson.

- Ask for event recommendations. Find out what other events people have found useful.
- Talk about your preparation for the event. What sessions would be good for you, what should you bring, etc.



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