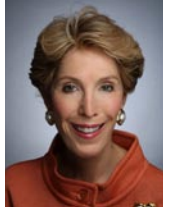


We're All Connected

The Ins and Outs of Networking

5 Questions for Andrea Nierenberg
Best-Selling Author and President of The Nierenberg Group



no matter what your profession or experience level, networking is probably the single most critical skill you need to master. Unfortunately most of us devote only limited time to networking and that is typically used inefficiently. How can you maximize this powerful tool to help you build relationships and uncover opportunities? Here are some insights from networking guru Andrea Nierenberg, who advises that much of what we need to do is common sense, even if it's not common practice.

1. *What exactly is networking?*

Networking means a lot of things to a lot of people. To me, it's all about continually building relationships through life. I always say that the opposite of networking is "not working" because every time you meet someone — no matter whom — that person can become a vital resource. Networking is a process, which happens all the time in the real world — not just at events. Sometimes networking is unconscious.

People will say "I don't network" and I'll say "well, do you ever reach out to your connections, clients or friends?" Typically they do this all the time, but they don't consider that networking. Networking is really just an umbrella over a whole range of relationship-building/people-gathering situations. Some of the most effective networking is serendipitous, so I walk around with 24/7 awareness because you just never know.

2. *What are the biggest mistakes—and misconceptions — you have seen in networking?*

Well, the single biggest is what I like to call "networkers in need." These are people who go to events with their own purpose in mind and try to get others to help them. But nobody likes being "sold at"; there has to be a sense of relationship. Another mistake is being a "hit and run networker," always focusing on the next conversation, rather than being present to the conversation at hand. The most important networking skill is being in the moment. You want people to listen to you, don't you?

Poor networking is full of misconceptions and missed opportunities. Too often, people look at networking as a quid pro quo. A CPA, attorney or banker might refer someone a piece of business and then expect something back, but it doesn't

work that way. We make referrals when they're appropriate and sometimes that takes time. People also overlook the importance of a third party endorsement. The power of a personal endorsement is mightier than a weak lead.

And people's preferred methods of communication vary. Some people like phone calls and others like email. Keep it simple — ask them how they prefer to keep in contact if you want people to be glad to hear from you.

3. *What is a networking game plan — and how can a busy professional create a simple one?*

You can actually have a highly effective networking plan by devoting just 30 minutes each day to staying in touch. I have what I call my “Power of 4 Plan.” Every day, I send 4 email messages to people who prefer email, place 4 phone calls to people who prefer that, send out 4 short handwritten notes and 4 cards through an online greeting card store I use called “Send Out Cards.” At the end of the business week, 80 people have heard from me and I typically haven't spent more than two and a half hours to reach them.

There are two things that make this system work especially well for me and fall into my carpe diem category: One, I am always prepared to keep in touch when I have a few spare moments. I travel with a Blackberry, a cell phone and stamped notecards so I can reach out no matter where I am. The other is that, as much as possible, I try to act when I think of it rather than leaving it for tomorrow. It takes no time to reach out if you keep your message simple. And if the “Power of 4” approach seems a little overwhelming, I advise people to start off on a weekly “First Power” program, where they reach out once per week by email, phone and handwritten note. Even that will put you ahead of the game.

4. *One problem people have with staying in touch is knowing what to say. What do you advise them to do?*

People obsess. Don't write a whole big piece — just something short, sweet and to the point. Even better, think of something that relates to the person you are networking with — tell them about an article, a TV program or a meeting you've just attended. Shoot off a quick note, fyi, or even a voice message, saying

*M*uch of networking is common sense.
It's just not common practice.



“thought you’d be interested,” “hope you’re well” or “just touching base.” Make sure to read at least *The Wall Street Journal* front page and your local paper. And what about saying thank you? We don’t thank people — especially our clients — nearly enough.

5. *What about networking at formal events or in established networking groups?*

As I said before, “networking in motion” is what I find most effective, but I also, in the course of a week — or certainly every month — will plan to go to an event just so I can be out there and touch base. One day recently, I was at my Rotary Club for lunch, then later that night I spoke for an organization of women in the arts. I keep myself open and available because you never know.

Regular networking groups have their purpose, too. But like all networking, these groups cannot be just quid pro quo or “hit and run.” You have to commit to building relationships with the people in the group. This means you have to pick a group you are really going to get involved with.

If I want to get involved with a new organization and want to try it on for size I’ll use my 2/2/2 strategy: I’ll commit to go to two meetings. I’ll make sure I connect with at least two people at each and learn about them and their business. Then, I’ll arrange two follow-up meetings. Although I may not join that particular group, at least I will have done something.

Andrea R. Nierenberg is an in-demand business expert with an international following who has been a leader in sales and marketing for over 25 years. She is founder and president of The Nierenberg Group, which has been described as “a networking success story” by The Wall Street Journal.



*Andrea is the author of three best-selling books that help people get more from their networking and build their businesses: **Nonstop Networking: How to Improve Your Life, Luck and Career**; **Million Dollar Networking: The Sure Way to Find, Grow and Keep Your Business**; and **Savvy Networking: 118 Fast & Effective Tips for Business Success**.*

Andrea’s face and voice are familiar to the audiences of Bloomberg Business Television; Time-Warner’s Fortune Business Report; Fox News Chicago; Wall Street Journal Weekend and PBS’s The Business Channel. She has also taught both undergraduate and MBA students at the nation’s top educational institutions, including the University of Chicago, Washington University and New York University.

Andrea can be reached at 212.980.0930 or andrea@nierenberggroup.com (she’ll be glad to hear from you by whichever method you prefer.)



info@evokestrategies.com

212.967.7611

www.evokestrategies.com

Get Interesting ...

Get Evoke!

Who do you want to connect to — and how will you do it?

These are the keys to effective marketing. Chances are good that you know “who,” but could use some help with “how.” Evoke is ready to provide that help. With our expertise — and our access to other experts (like Andrea) — making the right connections will become an important — and valuable — part of your business development strategy.

For more information, visit www.evokestrategies.com, email info@evokestrategies.com or call **212.967.7611**