

Program Review: The Power of Networking

by John G. Olson

Did you know that there are only five degrees of separation between you and the Pope? Speaker Jerry Bernhart laid out the series of contacts required to get a meeting with the Pope as an illustration of the power of networking at the January 17th luncheon meeting held at the Country Inn & Suites in Bloomington. It was just one of several highlights he shared in the informative and entertaining session.

“Networking is a life skill that should be a constant practice, not just done when you’re looking for a job or business opportunity,” he stated at the outset. “Networking never stops!” He went on to identify the seven habits of good networkers:

1. Be confident. Don’t be afraid to ask for what you want.
2. Show appreciation to those who help you.
3. Consistently nurture your relationships.
4. Be tenacious, but not aggressive, in going around obstacles.
5. Be an excellent listener.
6. Rebound quickly from rejection.
7. Be friendly and approachable.

He noted that networking is not the exclusive domain of extroverts. In fact, introverts can be very dynamic networkers because they are—by nature—focused, thoughtful, and good listeners. “You have two ears and one

mouth,” he said. “That means, as a general rule, you should spend twice as much time listening as you do talking.”

Good communication skills are essential to effective networking, and Bernhart spent significant time reviewing the fundamentals of the best communicators. Since more than 90 percent of communication is nonverbal, he led an instructive, interactive demonstration of the various body language signals you may encounter in a typical conversation.

Bernhart also shared the three universal laws of networking. First is the *law of abundance*, which assumes that there is plenty of opportunity for everyone. Second is the *law of reciprocity*, which requires you to give back as much as you get from a networking relationship. Third is the *law of giving without expectation*. Stay within these parameters and you can’t go wrong, he advised.

Many in the audience came to pick up creative networking tips, and

Bernhart did not disappoint. Some of his suggestions include recognizing birthdays, making three contacts every week, and being sure to sit with people you don’t already know at networking events. He also suggested targeting a list of people you’d like to meet before an event and find a way to contact them to arrange a meeting.

Bernhart offered one final tip for staying in touch with your key contacts: the handwritten note. With e-mail and instant messaging so common and easily available, the handwritten note is an extremely powerful personal touch that makes an impression. That’s a direct marketing fundamental easily overlooked.

To view more articles by John G. Olson, go to <http://johnolson.efoliomn1.com>. Contact him at john.olson7@comcast.net.



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