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Mon, June 8, 2009

By ALLISON GRAHAM, LONDON FREELANCE WRITER

At a recent event, I heard Tim Cork, author of *Tapping the Iceberg: Achieving Straight A's*, explain that statistics show most sales happen after the fifth contact; however, most people quit after only the first or second attempt at a sale.

When it comes to networking, the same predicament applies. Showing up once or twice isn't going to cut it if you're looking to expand your network and develop business relationships.

Networking is not a quick fix to your business development challenges. It's a long-term solution that, when done professionally and properly, will lead to incredible success.

Those who start networking expecting instant returns, then give up or change direction on a whim, are setting themselves up for failure -- but it happens all the time.

Instead of walking away, pick your spot and put in your time to build credibility. You want to give your new contacts a chance to know who you are and develop trust in what you do professionally.

Staying the course when you're anxious to succeed and feel like things aren't happening quickly enough can be very difficult. It's easy to lose sight of the ultimate goal and give up.

The reality is, it takes time to build a strong network, but if you plan to be in business 18 months from now, it's time well invested.

If you don't stay the course, in a couple of years, you'll still be wondering why you don't have enough contacts to fill your revenue pipeline.

Reader question


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Q When you see a business contact at a restaurant, what is the appropriate etiquette? Should you go up to the table to say hi or not? -- Roy, London

Dear Roy: This is tricky. If you just walk by and don't say anything, you miss the opportunity to reconnect. If you stop and talk, you may interrupt and cause an awkward moment. Each situation is different -- the key is to quickly assess the intensity of the situation.

People who are focused only on their tablemates and seem engaged in business talk generally do not want to be interrupted. Those who are out for a casual get-together generally welcome the introduction of another person for a quick hello.

Ultimately, the person who is sitting has control. If he makes eye contact and waves you over, definitely stop for a quick chat. If he ignores you or gives a quick wave then refocuses on his tablemates, don't take offence. Just give a nod and keep walking.

To be an effective table surfer:

- Keep it short and light -- this is not the time for a full-on catchup or to solve major dilemmas.

- Acknowledge and engage in dialogue with the other table guests. If you've ever been a third wheel while two people engage in inside banter, you know how uncomfortable this can be.

Book donation

I recently presented Junior Achievement graduates with copies of my book, Business Cards to Business Relationships.

So many people have told me they wished they'd known more about networking earlier in their careers, it seemed like a fitting send-off for these aspiring local entrepreneurs.

If you'd like to check out the book, I'll be at Chapters South for a book signing Saturday from noon to 3 p.m.

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