

SALES SPEAK

Grip, Grin ...
And Grow

By Peter A. Johnson

If you want to grow your practice, it is time to stop hiding behind your LinkedIn page and website profile and stride boldly into the field where real, live clients and referrals sources dwell. It is time to look someone in the eye and shake their hand.

Many of us went to law school to avoid having to become a salesperson and the “schmoozing” that went with it. Times have changed. To be a successful and profitable attorney requires us to pay more attention to the business of law by incorporating business development into our daily routines. That skill set includes becoming adept at networking.

I don't mean keeping in touch through social media resources such as LinkedIn or Twitter. While those have a place in your personal marketing plan, it is important to keep in mind that we are in a profession that values — thrives on! — personal relationships. The most effective marketing still occurs when you look someone in the eye and shake their hand. In short, networking.

NETWORKING

Networking is an over-used word and a frequently
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Crisis: Controlling the Threats and Seizing
The Opportunities

By Jennifer Connelly

When it comes to crises, businesses practically tie themselves in knots trying to avoid any potential conflict.

We see this scenario play out the same way time and time again. A company's executive responds to a reporter's query with a pat “no comment.” A virulent rumor makes the rounds on social media only to be met with radio silence from the brand. A business moves to quietly settle a bogus lawsuit rather than expose itself to even a whiff of bad publicity. Burying your head in the sand will not make a crisis go away. It will only make the situation worse. What's more, by avoiding — rather than confronting, controlling, addressing and resolving — problematic situations, businesses miss out an opportunity to show their true worth, to prove that they are battle-tested and poised to stand the test of time.

You might not be able to control when a crisis happens, but you can control how you respond, provided you've taken the time to prepare. While every crisis is different, there are a few key steps to follow to ensure that brands or businesses not only survive a crisis, but bounce back stronger.

BE FIRM

It was the type of lawsuit a lot of big brands would ignore. A California woman filed suit against Taco Bell in 2011, claiming the fast-food chain didn't have enough beef in its beef taco. The lawsuit, which quickly sought class-action status, was a head-scratcher: There was no study to suggest that Taco Bell's fillings were, as the lawsuit claimed, only 35% beef, with additives, chemicals and preservatives making up the rest.

Taco Bell's lawyers and communications staff decided that there were too many risks to downplaying the lawsuit, so they decided to aggressively fight the allegations. Taco Bell escalated the matter in court, threatening a counter-suit that

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claimed the allegations were false and designed to hurt its business.

Then came the public relations fight. Taco Bell bought full-page ads in *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and other newspapers, stating: "Thank You for Suing Us. Here's the Truth About Our Seasoned Beef." The ads went on to stress that the Taco Bell filling was a full 88% beef, and even laid out its recipe. They ended with an unambiguous statement: "We stand by the quality of our seasoned beef 100% and we are proud to serve it in all our restaurants. We take any claims to the contrary very seriously and plan to take legal action against those who have made false claims against our seasoned beef."

The company's social media channels echoed the same message. The CEO distributed a YouTube video on which he talked about the quality of Taco Bell's products. Taco Bell's Facebook page gave away coupons for free tacos. And executives made the rounds in broadcast and print media.

The result? The initial lawsuit was dropped without any payment or concessions to the plaintiffs. In the end, no one questions what goes into a Taco Bell taco — no small feat for a fast-food company.

A crisis can be an opportunity to emerge stronger, but it takes a strategic and aggressive response.

BE EARLY

The best time to plan for a crisis is before one happens. Some crises, like the Taco Bell lawsuit, are external and hard to predict. However, many crises stem from internal failings.

To get in front of these scenarios requires a full assessment of a company's risks and, most of all, an honest discussion. You can't fight what you won't name — if executives are

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loose cannons, if products have potential liability, or if financial transactions are not adding up.

Once you've done your due diligence, it's time to develop your crisis plan. Executives and board members should consult with their communications teams — both internal and external. During that time, PR professionals can devise the right message to ensure that stakeholders are up to speed and ready to move.

Not being involved early can often confuse the message. Take the case of retailer Men's Wearhouse and its founder George Zimmer. The company's board fired Zimmer, long the public (and outspoken) face of the brand, but issued just a short statement that didn't give a reason for the termination. That allowed Zimmer, himself a marketing and messaging genius, to manage and control the story.

Zimmer was vocal about his disagreements with the board, and, because he was the only person willing to go on the record, he painted the directors in an unfavorable light, all to his own professional benefit. It was almost a full week after the firing that the company's board issued a more complete statement, giving what seemed like a valid reason for parting ways: Zimmer had discussions about taking the company private, without involving his board of directors. The delay in communicating, though, made the company and the board appear as it had been caught off-guard.

BE UNAMBIGUOUS

In 1982, seven people in Chicago died after taking Tylenol that was laced with cyanide. There was widespread panic and fear about the ability to tamper with medication, and with Tylenol in particular. Johnson & Johnson, the manufacturer, had every reason to simply try to reassure the marketplace that its product was safe. After all, the deaths weren't related to the medication itself. How can you blame a company for criminal acts by sick outsiders?

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It's Time to Reassess Your Social Media Goals

By Keith Ecker

We have reached a certain level of maturation within the world of social media. Some social networks have thrived, while others have floundered. Google+, despite its initial buzz, has proven to be a bust, marked by high-profile personnel exits and service uncouplings, including YouTube. Meanwhile, Twitter has been faltering as of late, with reports that revenue is shrinking and users are becoming disengaged.

At the same time, newer platforms, particularly Instagram and Snapchat, are gaining dominance, due in part to a younger demographic that appears to be more enticed by filtered images and short videos than text and links to articles. In fact, as of this writing, Snapchat boasts 100 million daily active users, though it is estimated that only 18% of U.S. social media users are on the platform.

Given that the social media landscape of today is already drastically different than the social media landscape of three years ago, how should legal marketers invest their time and money in order to derive the greatest return on their investments? The answer starts with a thorough look at a law firm's social media goals.

THE STATUS QUO

As a content consultant to law firms, I see a lot of social media strategies. And, by and large, most law firms play it very safe. The vast majority use social media as a way to attract more site visits by

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distributing content that is largely housed on the firm website. The thought is that if you hook them with your social media post, then you can bait them with the content on your site. It's a good strategy, one that helps usher visitors through the sales cycle, beginning at awareness ("This social media post is relevant to me. I should click on it.") to interest ("This article that I clicked on is of value. Maybe I should check out the rest of the site.").

... The vast majority of law firms do not have a written content strategy ... they do not have an actual codified set of goals that dictate their social media usage.

But is there more we can be doing with social media than just sharing the content that exists on law firm websites? Is there other content we can create that statistically performs better on social media? Can we take advantage of new platforms in a way that doesn't require too great of an investment — since, after all, who knows when the next big thing will come along and disrupt the market? To answer these questions, law firms need to first reassess what they hope to get out of social media.

CHOOSE YOUR GOALS

The first place to turn is your content strategy. Unfortunately, the vast majority of law firms do not have a written content strategy, which means they do not have an actual codified set of goals that dictate their social media usage. Legal marketers who work without a set of guidelines are operating on a relatively ad-hoc basis with no clear way to discern success or failure. Furthermore, if "success" is calculated at all, it's often arrived at by

counting click-throughs and impressions, which are good metrics, but with specific goals comes specific key performance indicators that can better help legal marketers evaluate and refine their executions.

To aid you in this effort, here is a list of social media goals that legal marketers might want consider:

- **Awareness:** I call this use of social media "PR 2.0." It's what most law firms are already doing, creating posts that update their social media following about news relating to the firm and its attorneys. Posts are usually text-based, with the occasional use of a standard image.
- **Brand Building:** This tactic is a form of community building, where law firms try to build affinity around their brand using social media channels as a primary vehicle for their messaging. More adventurous law firms aim for this goal by creating share-worthy videos and images. Many develop a unique brand voice that separates their posts from the competition and represents the ethos of the firm. The goal here is to not only generate new followers but to generate engaged followers.
- **Client Retention and New Business Development:** For law firms that have clients and prospects who actively use social media (a demographic that is growing every year as Gen X and millennials start to assume decision-making roles), social media can be a client and prospect engagement tool as long as lawyers and legal marketers use it strategically by sharing information that is of actual value to the reader in his or her role, e.g., industry news, legal developments, etc. Direct communication, such as

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Social Media Scene

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private and direct messages, can also be a good tactic, if used judiciously.

- **Recruitment:** This is probably one of the most valuable uses of social media, due in large part to LinkedIn, which has grown to become a dominant force in the recruiter-prospect relationship. Any law firm interested in recruiting today's top talent should have a LinkedIn Company Page and actively advertise for open positions on the network.

EXECUTE YOUR STRATEGY

Law firms don't have to select a singular goal with social media. Different platforms can have different combinations of goals because each network claims its own unique audience, each with a unique set of motivations. For example, Facebook is the catch-all social network where people go for everything, from sharing baby pictures to reading the latest *New Yorker* column. LinkedIn, on the other hand, is more niche. It's dominated by professionals seeking job opportunities and career information.

But codifying your intentions for each social media network in a content strategy — one that is, of course, always evolving — is critical. And part of your social media plan should include execution strategies, *i.e.*, who do you want to target, why are you targeting them, what are you targeting them with and how are you measuring your success.

Below are some tips on how to use social media to achieve your specific goals.

- **Awareness and Brand Building:** These relatively top-of-the-funnel functions are meant to accomplish the bare minimum — inform the market that you exist and encourage a positive perception of your brand. The challenge is that social media is a crowded place, so just posting

text-based content is likely not going to cut it. This is where developing multimedia, *e.g.*, videos, infographics, photos, etc., comes in handy. Consider conducting a survey of general counsel, and develop an infographic from the data you receive. Interview your managing partner on camera about why law firm culture is important, and be sure the story he or she shares is genuine and not a well-recited speech.

Different platforms can have different combinations of goals because each network claims its own unique audience ...

- **Client Retention and New Business Development:** To connect with your clients and prospects, you need to speak to their interests. Of course, you can't be all things to all people. You have to go niche, and one way to do this is to develop an industry-specific blog, co-authored by a cross-section of attorneys. The blog content should not merely recite something that happened in the news. It should contain analysis written in an engaging voice and tone that reflects your firm or practice's brand. Attorneys who work within the industry can post blog links to their own social media handles or create a handle specific to the industry or practice.
- **Recruitment:** As mentioned, LinkedIn is the social network for recruiters and job hunters. Having a LinkedIn Company Page is a good start, but it's not enough if you want to recruit the best talent. You have

to express the values and culture of your firm genuinely, as paying lip service will only hurt your brand in the long run. To do this, consider sharing posts related to your firm's culture and the culture of the legal industry as a whole (*e.g.*, diversity issues, compensation issues, etc.). Don't be afraid to have an opinion and to share it. You can also have firm management author a long-form post on the network's blogging platform.

LOOKING AHEAD

Staying educated on where social media is today and where it appears to be going is of the utmost importance for legal marketers. The strategies you created just a couple years ago might be outdated and certainly need to be revisited.

You also need to create a written content strategy, one that speaks to your social media goals, executions and analysis. And, you need to incorporate information about the newer social media platforms. Yes, it's likely that your firm is not going to use Snapchat anytime soon, which is perfectly understandable given that the platform is largely populated by a market outside of your target demographic. But that could change sooner than you think, as the young and tech-savvy are always the earliest adopters of new technology. Also, newer platforms could potentially offer your firm value, such as Periscope. The service, which allows users to live-stream content from their devices, could be used to affordably live broadcast a speaking engagement.

The world is changing rapidly. If we want to keep up, legal marketers need to continue to look ahead and anticipate what tomorrow might bring.



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Getting to Insights And Acting on Them: That's All That Matters

By Peter J. Ozolin

Market Intelligence, Competitive Intelligence, Business Intelligence — does it matter what we call it?

The short answer is “no.” Intelligence is the action of defining, gathering, analyzing, and distributing information about products, clients, competitors, and any aspect of the business needed to support executives and managers who are making strategic decisions for an organization. In the law firm context, we monitor news, litigation, trends, social media and a plethora of other sources to derive that intelligence. What we call it is irrelevant, the only relevant question is whether the recipient derives value and gleans insight from it.

Fundamentally, getting to value and insight comes down to adhering to one simple rule and asking two operative questions: The information must be actionable. Will it change behavior and thought processes? Will it create action? That action need not be immediate, as not all intelligence or information needs to have that attribute to be of value. It is helpful to think about information as either: 1) helping the recipient to gain understanding, and as a result, evaluate a further action at a later date; or 2) something that this group or individual will care about now. Whatever form of knowledge you are seeking to share, the thrust of information's value still hinges on the question, “Is this an insight that will benefit me or a group (client

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team, industry team, practice team, etc.) today, tomorrow or in the near future?” If you can answer that question accurately, then you will have successfully turned information into knowledge or intelligence.

WHAT IS ACTIONABLE INFORMATION?

In the first part of this article, I describe how to ascertain if information is actionable, and then I share some thoughts on how a law firm might think about getting to those insights on a regular basis. It's no secret that we are drowning in information — and the efforts to get the attention of stakeholders is often half (or more!) of the battle. Likewise, once we have their attention, getting busy professionals to focus on what it is that you as the marketer or business developer are sharing or communicating is the other half of the battle.

I enter every conversation with that in mind, and over the years, I have come to believe there are two categories of information/knowledge that really make a difference and cause action: Information that presents either a risk, or that presents an opportunity. Everything else is just noise. The real challenge is first, knowing what is a risk or an opportunity, and second, getting a busy professional to believe you.

LAWYERS DEAL WITH FACTS

Assuming that you are at least in part convinced by my logic — risk/opportunity orientation toward information — the first piece of the exercise is figuring out what a lawyer or team of professionals (client teams, industry teams, etc.) would consider to be a risk or an opportunity. There are some obvious assumptions we can make, of course — scenarios where we are seeing increased risk of lawsuits — for instance, Foreign Corruption Practices Act (FCPA) litigation or trends in industries such as food and beverage, where there has been an increase in lawsuits driven by false or misleading labeling of products

as “organic.” Most of us who have worked with lawyers long enough have some sense of how to assess risk. However, there's another way to understand the truly actionable pieces of information you are hoping to find: ask. Yes, that sounds simplistic, but this will help focus your own efforts on what to look for, and will prevent you from making potentially incorrect (and time-wasting) assumptions. Of course there are always the “risks” or “opportunities” that you cannot necessarily predict in advance, but even those have some sort of framework, e.g., news about companies as it pertains what's rumored to be happening or signs of distress — perhaps executive changes, restructuring, etc. While the risk and opportunities in those scenarios may not be imminent, they could be actionable or indicative of a problem down the road.

WHAT ABOUT ACTION?

Now that we have at least in part answered the first part of our challenge of how to get lawyers to identify risks and opportunities (and nothing else at this point), I often hear that the subsequent “action” does not take place. Hard to believe, but true, and common. I am a lawyer by training; I only share this because my whole frame of reference to problem solving is fact-based. Facts build a case, make an argument and, if manipulated correctly, can determine an outcome. So, if I want someone to act on a risk or an opportunity that I have identified and provided, then I need to present the recipient with the facts to support whatever action — long- or short-term — I am suggesting he or she take. The fact is, I may be 100% correct in my suggestion, but if I can't back it up with clear and convincing evidence, then I may not get the action I am hoping for. Here's a quick example: You tell a partner at your law firm that your research points to an increased possibility

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that the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is or has evolved to the point through various court interpretations that many clients may be at risk if they are not in compliance. Now, let's assume you are bringing this information to this partner fairly early in the news cycle, of news, so, strong enough to elicit a response like, "Of course, I am well aware of this possibility." How do you get the lawyer/firm to act? Bottom line: You are as good as your facts. At times, I think we assume we need more facts or evidence than are probably necessary.

For example, in the aforementioned case (FLSA), if one were to simply show that another major law firm had produced a publication discussing a recent court interpretation, provided evidence of a company that was recently sued, perhaps a plaintiff's firm that was blogging on the topic in order to build awareness in the public domain and/or in general that legal blog traffic had been increasing over the past couple of weeks — is that enough? Frankly, I

am not entirely sure, but I do know that my call for action is now based on the sort of information I know to be of increased value (risk or opportunity) and that my recommendation to act is fact-based.

DON'T PAINT YOURSELF INTO A CORNER

While I titled this article "Getting to Insights and Acting on Those Insights: That's All That Matters," that's probably not entirely true, as another important piece to any puzzle where we are attempting to get busy professionals to pay attention to news and information (intelligence) is to create a culture, process and workflows that enable decision-making to be efficient, scalable and effective. Generally speaking, this is not a one-size-fits-all application; however, there are certainly commonalities. First, I think it's a mistake to paint your process and people into a corner. I can't tell you how many times I have heard, "Our lawyers will never do/use/have interest in [fill-in-the-blank]." What's true today may not be true tomorrow. The tools lawyers use, other professionals in the organization use, changing priorities all

contribute to a different interest and emphasis as needs change.

Second, systems and tools make a huge difference in not only how you approach getting to insights, but those that offer the most flexibility and can be leveraged for many types of cases/users, are often the best choices long-term. Even if a firm is only trying to accomplish one objective today, that same firm, if successful in achieving that objective, will inevitably ask more of that system, as well as the personnel of that company going forward. As a former CKO/CTO of an AMLAW 25 firm and in my current role as a CEO of a growing company, my experience has shown that partnering with a vendor has always been what gets you the best result.

To get the rest of the story as to "how" do to set up a culture and framework for sharing, well, that's another column for another time.



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Crisis Management

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Instead, Johnson & Johnson famously recalled every bottle of Tylenol on the market, a great expense. The reason? The company's strategic value put consumers over profits, and the safety of its consumers was paramount. It wanted to send the most unambiguous message possible that it took its role seriously, it cared about its consumers and it would do all it could to ensure safety. No one could ever accuse Johnson & Johnson of putting profits first.

In the end, Johnson & Johnson reintroduced a tamper-proof bottle that allowed it to swiftly regain market share. In fact, as the first mover in tamper-proof packaging, it caught its competitors flat-footed. Best of all, its reputation was not only unscathed by the tragedy, it improved.

Language has power, but words must be followed by action. In any crisis, stakeholders want to see visible, out-front signs that a company understands its situation and is handling it. There should be no question about the action underlying a crisis. A crisis-communications strategy is responsible for that.

In any crisis, stakeholders want to see visible, out-front signs that a company understands its situation and is handling it.

BE COMPLETE

Even if you can't anticipate a crisis, you should have a plan in place before you need it.

This will mean working with counsel on the legal side, forming a decision-making team and deciding upon how to communicate best that message — both internally to employees and externally to clients and clients.

No crisis strategy can be effective if any messaging medium is ignored. In a social-media-driven world, that means outreach on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. You'll need to identify influencers both inside and outside media — and you should think about how to utilize digital-video channels like YouTube, broadcast and cable television, and newspapers and blogs.

No one likes to go through a crisis, but, when one arises, company leadership should see that the situation is as much an opportunity for brand-building as a challenge for brand erosion.



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misunderstood activity. But it is an integral part of business development with proven effectiveness. Yet networking remains something that many lawyers do not enjoy, try to avoid, and which takes them out of their comfort zone.

Some believe that only extroverts enjoy networking and can be successful at it. These are the same attorneys who dismiss networking as nothing more than “grip and grin,” and believe that the best part of an event is when it is over.

Much of this skepticism and discomfort is based on a lack of understanding of the process. This article outlines what networking really is, how to maximize networking opportunities, and how to overcome the personal demons which get in our way so that you can turn “grip and grin” into growth for your firm.

Setting Realistic Goals

And Expectations

Writing in *Inc.* magazine, author Lou Dubois defines a network as “a group of people who exchange information, contacts, and experience for professional or social purposes,” and networking as “making connections and maintaining relationships.” Well, that seems simple enough.

Where things go wrong is when we put pressure on ourselves to return from every luncheon, cocktail party or trade association meeting with a pocketful of new clients. We end up pressing too hard and driving away the very people to whom we want to get closer.

My advice is to approach every networking event as an opportunity to connect with other participants on a human level. We all enjoy doing business with people we like. So, instead of a hard sell, go in with the goal of meeting and having a

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conversation with one new person. Get to know him or her as a friend rather than a potential client. You’ll find that there will still be plenty of time to touch base with others, including people already in your network.

Overcoming Obstacles

First, let’s clear away the dead wood that can clutter up your mind and create barriers to fully entering the networking universe. The most onerous obstacle is the mistaken belief that any time spent on non-billable hours is wasted time. “How can I justify a two-hour breakfast meeting when I should be writing briefs?”

... Networking is not selling.

It is low-key relationship-

building that can actually

help you avoid the need

to sell.

In most firms, compensation is no longer tied exclusively to billable hours. You must also show a contribution to the growth of your firm through business development and marketing. Some legal marketing experts recommend that a partner in a mid-size to large law firm should dedicate a minimum of 200 hours per year to marketing.

Many attorneys have an aversion to “selling” their services or their firm. But networking is not selling. It is low-key relationship-building that can actually help you avoid the need to sell.

Finally, you may not feel you are a “people person,” and are uncomfortable in a face-to-face social interaction. In most cases, that can be overcome with a little preparation and planning, two activities at which lawyers are generally very proficient.

Before You Go

Rushing out of the office to dash over to a late afternoon networking event is a sure way to arrive flustered

and ill-suited to being charming and attentive. Treat every networking opportunity like a meeting with an important client, with preparation and research done in advance.

Start by finding out all you can about the nature of the event. Will everyone in attendance be members of the same industry? Or will it be a “mixer” that crosses all trades? Will there be a speaker with time later to network? Or, can you start making connections right away? The more you know going in, the better prepared you’ll be to have an intelligent and relevant conversation.

Know the dress code, then dress one level above. Even if the networking event is taking place poolside at a resort, you want to look the part of a professional, not the hired help. When you look good, you feel good and behave accordingly. Don’t forget to take an ample supply of business cards and put them in an easily accessible place.

Poll your partners and associates to see if any of them will also be attending, and coordinate your approach. Decide whether you will remain together during the event, or split up to reach out to more people. If you have a client or other business contact who might be attending, reach out in advance with a phone call or e-mail to “schedule” a meet up.

Finally, don’t bother to practice what is euphemistically called an “elevator pitch.” You should already have a comfortable handle on what your firm does and the practice areas on which you focus. When asked, “What do you do?” couch your response in terms to which the other person can relate. (“Well Nancy, we help distribution companies like yours to avoid import duty problems.”)

AT THE EVENT

For many people, the most challenging part of making contact is beginning and sustaining a conversation. But if you prepare well and have a positive attitude, you will be able to make meaningful contact with people at an event. Remember,

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everybody else is there to meet people like you. If you take the initiative, you'll find that you can direct a conversation to help gain information and build rapport.

Here's a quick seven-step process to making a good impression.

1. Be the first to make contact. Take the plunge and say hello. Make eye contact. Introduce yourself. Be confident and friendly. Be sure to listen carefully to the person's name and repeat it early in the conversation (a trick to help you remember the name). For example: "Good morning! I'm John Doe from XYZ law firm. What brings you to the meeting this morning?"
2. Ask easy questions first. Keep the initial conversation, well ... conversational. You don't have to launch right into a heavy, business-oriented speech. Make contact on a human level by making a personal observation ("That's a great suit. Who is your tailor?") If you know the individual, ask about family or a hobby. Or, ask for an update on their life since you saw them last.
3. Keep it interesting. Once you've started a conversation, how do you keep it from dying out? Focus on really listening to the other person, not on making a good impression. They'll give you clues as to what interests them and what they want to talk about. Listen for key words or repeated topics.
4. Be sure you are up on current events and the news (including sports, movies, theater, music). In fact, make sure

you've read the morning paper before attending a business event — headlines can make good icebreakers. For example: "I read something interesting in the Journal this morning ..."

5. Keep the conversation simple — avoid technical talk that seems like you are trying too hard to impress. Don't get trapped into "negative speak" — stay away from controversial or heavy topics or gossip. Don't be afraid of small talk or light topics. They are part of bond building on a personal level. For example: "I heard the Cape had its best tourist season ever this year ... " or, "What do you think about the latest bank merger?"
6. Watch your body language. The way you stand, where you look, where you put your hands — all contribute to the success of a conversation. DO: Smile, make eye contact frequently, extend your hand for a handshake (men and women), lean slightly toward the other person, nod often in agreement. DON'T: Cross your arms, frown too often, stare at the other person, put your hands near or over your mouth, keep both hands in your pockets (one hand is OK), look around for someone else while talking or listening.
7. Coming to a close. One of the most challenging aspects of any conversation is the end. It can be awkward and leave a bad impression, or pleasant, leaving a good memory. The worst is when you simply can't get away! End your conversation on a positive note. Recap something the other person said that impressed you, or something they felt

particularly strongly about. Say the other person's name and excuse yourself, but not too abruptly. For example: "Phil, I'm going to excuse myself and grab another cup of coffee. I hope that new business presentation you told me about goes well for you. Would it be OK if I called you next week to set up a lunch meeting?"

AFTER THE EVENT

Don't let months go by with a business card sitting on your desk, waiting for the "right time" to reconnect with a new contact. Send an e-mail no later than the next morning, including your contact information, a few words about how happy you were to make their acquaintance, and a heads up that you'll be sending them a LinkedIn connection request (which should be personalized, not the standard default request). Better yet, send a handwritten notecard. That is sure to leave a positive and lasting impression.

Enter your new contact's name into your personal contact list and your firm's CRM database system within 24 hours. Any longer and you'll forget all about it.

Your new contact is now part of your network. Be sure he or she is included in newsletters, notices, event invitations and other communications from the firm. More importantly, keep the connection you have made alive by actively communicating through personal marketing channels such as LinkedIn, e-mail and future face-to-face opportunities. Because networking never ends.



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