

ATTRACT CLIENTS ONLINE

WHERE TO NETWORK AND CREATING YOUR NETWORKING PLAN

When you think of networking, you don't want to just think about going to one event and whether you can get one client. That may certainly be an objective for a networking event, but for long-term results-

Networking is part of a complete marketing plan. When you network, what you are doing is creating a network.

You're creating a group of people who:

- know, like, and trust you,
- may know your ideal clients, and
- are willing to refer people to you

As you learn about all of these different networking opportunities, I want you to think about creating a networking plan to create a network – a group of people who love you, and want to help you grow your business.

YOUR IDEAL CLIENT

As you look at the different types of networking groups and events, one of the things you'll want to keep in mind is –

Who is my ideal client?

It's not that your ideal client may be at one of these events, but the people in these events may know your ideal clients – and it's just a bonus if your ideal clients are in those groups. Often what you're going to be doing as you network, is you're going to be making connections that can lead to referral business.

These types of groups include networking and leads groups, clubs (personal and professional), service organizations, hobbies and interest groups, industry and related industry events, and small business events in your area. Let's go over each type of group in greater detail.

VARY YOUR NETWORKING

When creating your networking plan – it's a good idea to have a multi-pronged approach.

Types of networking groups/events include:

- Local business networking groups and leads groups
- Clubs
- Service organizations
- Hobby and interest groups
- Industry (and related industry) events
- Small business events

Local Business Networking Groups and Leads Groups

These groups are:

- Structured
- Main goal is the exchange of business referrals
- Meet weekly or bi-weekly
- Usually limit to one person per industry/field

Examples of Networking and Leads Groups include:

- BNI
- LeTip
- Chamber of Commerce (and Holistic Chamber of Commerce)
- Other local structured networking groups

*The purpose of regular networking with these types of groups is to create a Professional (local) Network, so that you get trusted referrals.

Know before you go

You'll want to do some research before committing to a networking group.

Suggestions:

- Research online: what networking groups are in your local area?
- Ask those you know: what groups have they visited and/or are actively attending. You can do this in conversation or even on social media – Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Ask in general or about a specific group to find out if it's an effective group. You can ask those have a similar ideal client as yours.

For example:

“Is _____ an effective group? Have you gotten leads from it?”

The goal is not to find out if it's a great social group or if someone 'feels really supported in their business,' but- Are they actually getting clients?

- Make a list of top groups you plan to visit. This is part of filling out your networking plan.

Test them out

You'll want to visit various groups to try them out.

- Visit multiple groups and visit more than once. Every networking group can have a bad night or a good night, so you want to get more of an overall picture.
- Make sure the group is compatible with your business, you like what's going on, it seems like people are really active in the group, etc.
- Make sure that these networking groups have businesses in them that are also serving your ideal clients.
- Even if you don't like that particular networking group, ask others where they network. You can meet new people and get great information that way.

For example:

“Where do you network? What groups have you visited? What groups are you actively attending?”

Decide on one or two groups that you'll want to attend on a regular basis.

Many of these groups have a fee to attend for a year, so you want to make sure that it's something really good that you feel being a part of. Usually the fee is a few hundred dollars and you'll earn that back with one client.

Other Effective Places to Network

Clubs and Service Organizations:

Examples include:

- Toastmasters – especially if you are giving Signature Talks
- Kiwanis
- Rotary

Toastmasters is a great organization to give portions of your Signature Talk. Often you'll get referral business from there because you're constantly testing out the speech for your business.

Hobbies and Interest Groups:

Examples include:

- Arts
- Yoga
- Meet-up Groups – others' groups or create your own
- Charities and charitable events

Industry (and related industry) and Small Business Events

These events can be a very effective place to network – for referral partners and to also learn from what others are doing successfully. For example, you might attend a conference related to your ideal clients.

Examples include:

- Events found via Eventbrite – others' events or create your own
- Events specific to your industry/field or related
- Specific Small Business events

Hint: Imagine that you are your ideal client and begin Googling places to network (as if you are that ideal client.) What are the conferences and events that they would attend?

CREATE YOUR NETWORKING PLAN

- **Have a goal of how many Networking groups and events you want to attend weekly/monthly:** Including one or two regular groups (that meet once a week or bi-weekly) and other groups and events.

*Recommendation is at least once per week.

If you live in a smaller town, plan on attending a few events in a bigger city once in a while.

- **Put your Networking events on your calendar.**
These are gold and you want to make sure you attend.

- **Track outcomes of your leads from Networking events.**

Networking events should be a regular part of your marketing plan. Use your sales and networking sheet and track the people you met, the follow-up that you do.

What's the best plan for you – to get in front of people who can refer you or get in front of your ideal clients?