



Okay, full disclosure- I was a little bit sneaky with the title of this lesson.

Or maybe we can call it intentional.

If I named it what it really is, which is networking, I was afraid you wouldn't watch it, because most people really don't like networking.

And I get it because if your association with networking is going to some hotel lobby for an intentionally designed networking event and you've had that experience that so many of us have had where you're standing around and you don't know who to talk to and you don't know what to say, of course you have a negative association with networking.

But building your professional network is so much more than that, and it's essential to whatever success you are trying to achieve.

Today we're going to focus on how to cultivate your network.

Yes, how to successfully network so that you can reach the goals that you have for yourself.

In its purest sense, networking is the establishment and nurturing of mutually beneficial relationships.

Networking is not just a networking event.

It's not just coffee breaks when you're at a conference.

Networking in its purest sense is relationship building.

So if that makes it feel a little bit easier for you, then think about it that way. Networking really is just relationship building.

An important piece of this, like all relationships, should be that it's mutually beneficial.

One of the reasons that networking is so uncomfortable for so many of us is that it's often one-sided.

Either we feel like we're asking someone for something which might make us uncomfortable or someone is trying to push something on us and sell us something which also feels uncomfortable.

But when networking is done well and effectively it feels good because it's simply relationship building.

It's getting to know someone and it results in something that is mutually beneficial.

So whatever success you're striving for, whatever that looks like for you, who you know



and who is in your network is going to have a significant influence on that.

It's important that you're intentional about how you're cultivating your network and who you're cultivating it with.

Again, it's not just networking events.

It's everywhere and with everyone.

When I went out on my own and I started my business, it was uncomfortable for me to talk to people about my business.

I didn't want to feel like I was pushing myself on them, or I was some sleazy salesperson.

One of the first clients I got I met in a casual atmosphere.

We were just chit-chatting and they asked me what I did. I mentioned it in passing. Then I asked what they did and we started talking about something else and sure enough about six months later, they reached out to me and said they wanted to talk about hiring me which they eventually did.

The results don't always happen immediately and that's why it's important to cast a wide net- although an intentional one- to expand the people in your network. You never know who knows who knows who knows who might be able to make a mutually beneficial connection with you and what you're looking for.

Yes, you can attend networking events if they're valuable to you, but that is certainly not the only place where you can build and cultivate your network.

There are countless benefits to being a good networker- getting jobs, promotions, raises, getting support, getting accolades for yourself or your organization where you might not be aware yet of what opportunities are out there.

As you start to build that network you learn of ways that you can submit your staff for getting certain awards or recognition, building your partnerships- and here's a key piece of networking and building that effective network that a lot of people miss and that is- helping other people get what they want and need too. When you start to become someone who connects people to each other, who connects people to opportunities, whether it's an article or a job or a training, is when you become the person who reaches out and says, hey, 'I know you're interested in this. I'm sending this along to you. I read this today and thought of you.'

Hope it brings you some value when you show that you are trying to build an authentic relationship because you really do want to help people and ultimately the field by sharing opportunities. That helps solidify that relationship and it will help that person think of you more frequently when they come across an opportunity or something that they might want to share.



As you start to work more intentionally on building up your network, something to think about is how you can benefit.

A lot of times our brains default to the pain point, right?

*I don't want to go to this event because...* and then we start to think of all the negatives.

It's awkward.

It's uncomfortable.

There's no parking.

It's too late at night or whatever.

All of those things may be true. You don't need to dismiss them or pretend they don't exist. But as you acknowledge them, also acknowledge what the benefit might be.

It can really help whether it's an event or just a regular conference or training or wherever you might be in a position to meet people is to go in with a goal.

Maybe you want to make a connection with one person.

Maybe you're looking for someone to hire or a volunteer or a training opportunity.

Center your relationships around that and try to connect around what you need so it can help to have a goal instead of just walking in and hoping for the best.

Take the pressure off. You're just meeting people. It doesn't have to be a big thing. It can just be an opportunity to meet someone new. If you walk out of that event or that moment having met someone new and maybe that's as far as the benefit takes you that's a great benefit. You met someone new. Not every relationship is going to result in something tangible. But you've met a nice cool person. You've practiced your networking skills so you can continue to do them well.

Most people have a bit of that awkward uncomfortable feeling too so you're not alone.

Focus on what you can provide for them, not just the goal that you're looking for, but what you can offer to other people.

People love to talk about themselves, so listen really well and ask a lot of questions and almost always that's going to keep the conversation going.

When it comes to jobs- networking is not just about jobs- but one thing to keep in mind, even if you're not job searching now is it takes on average five months to find a new job, but often much longer than that and about 70% of jobs are never posted.



You can see where your network is really essential to get you to your next position talking to people so you can find out about those jobs that aren't posted which is the majority.

Some best practices to always do, not just when you're currently job searching, is update that LinkedIn profile.

Now a lot of times when people meet instead of exchanging business cards, they jump on LinkedIn and connect that way.

Make sure your social media is all cleaned up. Take on a mindset of giving not just what you're looking for. Always be looking to build relationships. Connect with others and focus on that mutual part.

So something for you to think about is, where can you step up your networking?