



# Connection Pros

I'd like you to do me a favor. Before you begin reading this article, take a moment to walk outside and notice that summer is almost over. Some of the signs of cooler weather are that the evenings are feeling much nicer and some of the mornings are starting to feel down right brisk. You are starting to turn off the AC and opening the windows again. You are beginning to eye your favorite sweaters and wondering when you will be able to wear them. These are just some of the subtle signs of fall.

Another tell-tale sign of fall is that your business REALLY begins to pick up. You are going into fourth quarter and you're ready to hit the ground running. One of the best ways to make sure your fourth quarter is stronger than ever is to make sure you spend time actively networking your business. Last month, I started identifying some of the best tips I know to help you network more successfully and more profitably. Let's continue with that list.

Let's begin with a simple question. Do you know the difference between a networking group and a leads group? A leads group is a gathering of business people, typically one person per industry. The main goal of the group is to find business leads for each other. It is very important that you get to know the other members of the group and it is equally important that the other members get to know as much about your business as possible too.

A networking group is a much less pressured environment. You want to try and generate leads for other members but it is not a requirement. Networking groups are normally more supportive in nature and will expose you to more people because they don't limit their groups to just one person per industry. The best way to find out whether you want to join a networking group or a leads group is to try them both. Everyone has an opinion on which is best but the only way to make your own decision is to experience them both for yourself.

When you're at a networking function and people come up to you, hand you a business card and starts telling how everything you ever wanted to know about their business, is your first reaction "Who the heck are you and what are you trying to sell me?" As you can see, this isn't the first impression you want to make with people, especially people that could be a potential solid contact for you. You need to treat your business cards with more respect. Cards shouldn't be given to everyone. The perfect time to hand out a business card is when you have generated sufficient interest with the people you are talking to and



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they request one of your cards. This way of thinking not only allows for a better connection between you and others but it also saves you a fortune on business cards.

Here is one more tip. Most of what you read about networking is about what to do during a networking function. What to say, where to go, etc. However, the real success of a networking function is determined by how well you follow up with the people you meet. At the end of a function, you might have a handful of cards. Many of these cards are meaningless because you don't really know anything about the people that gave them to you. The ones you want to focus on are the cards given to you by people that you had a chance to connect with, people that you learned more about than just what they do and how they would like to sell it to you. Here is what I suggest you do. Divide your cards into two piles. In the first pile, let's call this pile A, put the cards of people that gave you their card without you asking for it. In the other pile, called pile B, put all the cards of the people that you requested cards from.

Starting with pile A, you want to follow up with them but don't take too much time because you don't have a real connection to build off of. I normally write a generic e-mail that says something like this: Dear whateveryournameis, Just a quick note to say it was a pleasure meeting you at whereevertheheckyoumetthem. Add another line that fits for the circumstance and end it.

For those in pile B, you can send the same e-mail but mention in the e-mail any specific parts of any conversations you had to spark their memory of you. Also, make sure you add some sort of action line. Such as "I will call you this week to discuss....." Or "Please call me at XXX-XXXX to chat more about ?????". For those of you that prefer the more traditional form of follow-ups, such as note cards sent by snail mail, feel free to do that but remember, while a mailed note card might be a bit more personal, an e-mail is faster to send and much easier for the recipient to respond to. Regardless of how you do it, remember that nothing is hardly ever sold while you are networking, it is almost ALWAYS sold with the follow up.

Have a great month and enjoy the weather!!