

business development

Network Like an Introvert

BY TIM KLABUNDE

If you ever meet John, you'd take him for a hard-working guy who likes to have fun. He is an introvert by nature, who has succeeded at embracing networking.

John is one of those guys who can pick up the phone and bring more work in the door in one day than others do in a year. He has learned to succeed at networking not by perfecting his elevator speech or by collecting business cards but through the knowledge that developing one strong relationship is better than developing a thousand acquaintances.

For years, we have been told extroverts are better networkers than introverts, and there is no doubt that would be true if networking was about getting more business cards than your competition. But networking isn't about business cards; it's about building relationships with the objective of helping others, knowing that as you help others they will in turn help you. It is time we re-evaluate how we network and learn a few lessons from introverts on networking.

Introverts on building relationships

Relationships are the foundation of networking. Introverts and extroverts alike have a God-given instinct to develop relationships. The difference is that introverts have fewer relationships, but those they have tend to be more meaningful than those of extroverts. Surprisingly, this innate focus on relationships is the primary thing that stifles extroverts' success when networking. Introverts succeed because they concentrate on a small, select group of relationships that are positioned to make them succeed.

Most people perceive an obligation as a bad thing, yet introverts know that a strong sense of obligation is beneficial to developing a networking relationship.

Who would you rather network with: an introvert who is devoted to building or an extrovert who knows everyone and treats you as just one of many?

Introverts on helping others

While relationships are the foundation of networking, helping people is the objective. For an introvert, it is easy to focus on helping a small group of people by providing leads, referrals, information, and ideas to others. Extroverts may think they are helping hundreds of people, but in reality they are failing to focus on the key relationships that are poised to make them succeed. This broad approach leads to mediocre results, because it is strong relationships that truly become mutually beneficial. To succeed at networking, an extrovert needs to likewise develop a small group of key relationships.

Introverts on small groups

Why focus only on a small group of people? You do that because *networking succeeds when it creates a sense of obligation and urgency between two, or a few, people*. When someone provides you with a lead or referral you have an innate desire to help them in return. If they provide you with 10 leads and 10 referrals a month, now you have developed a healthy obligation to help them.

Most people perceive an obligation as a bad thing, yet introverts know that a strong sense of obligation is beneficial to developing a networking relationship. It creates urgency as both people work to help one another. The obligation that is developed by helping someone will keep you in the forefront of their mind, and them in the forefront of yours. As a result, both parties benefit as the relationship develops and they are actively motivated to help one another.

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Success is based on your plan, not your relational tendencies

You are not going to succeed at networking just because you were born an extrovert. It is time to sit down and write out a list of your top 10 key relationships that are poised to help you succeed. Then take those top 10 relationships and start focusing on introvert networking; that is, developing meaningful relationships with each of those people and focus on how you can help each of them succeed. **M**



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