

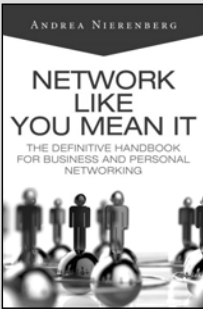
ANDREA R. NIERENBERG

ESSENTIAL BUSINESS NETWORKING

TIPS, TACTICS, AND TOOLS
YOU CAN USE



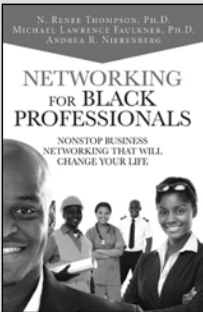
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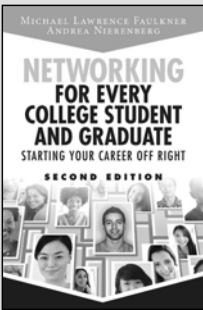
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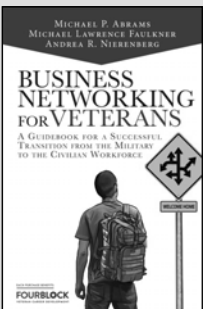


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ESSENTIAL BUSINESS NETWORKING

**Tips, Tactics, and Tools
You Can Use**

Andrea R. Nierenberg

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*To my wonderful parents, Molly and Paul,
who always taught me life's greatest lessons.*

*And to all of those who have made strategic networking
a tool for their success in life.*

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About the Author

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Her firm provides training in networking, sales, customer service, and presentation skills—all skills that impact the bottom line.

With a stellar 30 years as a leader in sales and marketing, Andrea is an in-demand business expert both at home and abroad. Her firm partners with an array of the world’s leading financial and media industry businesses.

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Preface

How to Use This Book

Networking is a positive word. Over the years, I have seen many successful people agree that networking is a vital tool for building long-term relationships.

My hope is that *Essential Business Networking* will give you a refresher course and encourage you to implement ways for connecting and reconnecting with people in your life daily, or that it will give you lots of new ideas and suggestions to put into action. There is a wealth of knowledge about the art of networking and relationship marketing in quick sound bites for easy reading and practicing.

This book is a simple read and provides a selection of my top tips organized into chapters representing logical steps for building a powerful network. You don't need to start at the beginning. For example, if you already feel very confident about your business networking skills and want to use this book to meet some new friends, you can leap ahead and start with Chapter 4, "Building Relationships."

Throughout the book, I have added stories from successful friends and colleagues, from whom I have also learned a lot about networking. For example, my good friend and colleague Lois Geller shares this life example:

"I was on a JetBlue flight and the woman sitting next to me seemed nervous. She was reading from a small book, and I figured she was praying. The ride was turbulent and I asked if she was okay. She told me about her fear of flying, then about her children—she had 11 of them—and soon she forgot about the rough flight. When we left the plane, we exchanged phone numbers and we became friends. Many times when we're together, she tells the story of how I 'saved' her—and she's saved me several times since then."

Was this networking? Absolutely. Sometimes all it takes is just extending an ear, getting into a conversation, anywhere or anytime, to make a connection.

I recommend taking on one tip at a time. Too often when we try to do too much, nothing happens. We get frustrated and don't accomplish anything. Look at the tip that calls out to you and then put it into practice with a true commitment. We live in an ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) culture, and my hope is that for you, the awareness of true networking becomes almost like oxygen—needed 24/7 with consistency.

Another friend, Daniel, always says, “You don't get it until you do it.” He started his networking adventure by “being present” at everything—from industry events to in-house management meetings. As he met people and reached out to them, he realized, “I have to be the one to take the initiative and start the process.”

I always say that it takes time to develop and see the results of your efforts. Yet, in this book, knowing your time constraints, I have digested and synthesized all of the tips and techniques into bite-sized action plans.

Pick any page, read a tip, and put it into action. In fact, if you are traveling, you can read something in Los Angeles and put it into action by the time you land in Chicago. The key is implementation.

Although everyone needs to network at their own pace, I have three main recommendations:

1. **Create your own order.** When someone asks me where to start, I say, “Anywhere.” The point is to just “do it” the way you work best—which is the only way it will work for you. Pick any tip or topic and concentrate on just that one. One of my clients told me that she randomly opens a page in one of my other books and just reads that page. “Somehow I find the technique to implement something I am working on,” she says. If this is the kind of inspiration you need, pick one chapter and dive in. There is no order; you create your own order as you go along.
2. **Know where you are and where you are going.** Set goals for how you want to work with new friends and business acquaintances to build a business and/or personal network.

3. Get into the habit of networking. Once you've learned the basics, you will feel more comfortable. You will enjoy meeting people and giving to them as much as they may give to you. Your network is your community, and you are an integral part of it. Here is an interesting thought: You are already networking in some fashion. I believe networking is a state of mind, an awareness of creating all sorts of connections and nurturing the ones you already have. Every tip in this book is timeless. Even if technology changes—yet again—the basic principles hold true. Human nature has always been the same, and networking involves people skills that have been proven over the centuries.

In this book, I give you insight into people, and then it's up to you to implement the skills you learn into your life. Technology enables the efficiency and frequency of our communications to move at lightning speed. Yet it is still the basic interpersonal, in-person techniques that are the most effective—and using these skills constantly and consistently is what makes them work.

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Introduction

Networking is about giving first.

Think of the amazing power you'll gain by following the advice from this statement. You will always feel better about yourself, and you might make someone else feel better, too. This simple statement can do a lot, not only for your business, but also for your life. It goes with my other favorite saying, which my father taught me: Give without remembering and receive without forgetting.

Start right now by thinking of someone you can reach out to and help with a business lead or reference, or someone to whom you can give a simple kindness or sincere compliment. Make sure that whenever you receive anything, no matter how small, you immediately reach back and thank the other person by note, call, email, text, gift, or some combination of them.

I was recently talking with Joel, a friend and former boss, who said the following: "We know when we are coming into the world; we just don't know when we are leaving. That is why it is a good idea to be kind to each person you meet."

Or, as my wonderful dad said every day while he was on this earth and still says to me as he looks down from heaven, "Give everyone you meet a smile and a handshake."

In going through his things after he passed, my mom and I came across this list of life lessons that he had written down and always kept in his wallet:

- Listen with your inner ear. Hear what is said with the heart, rather than what is said with words.
- Listen to the concerns of others.
- Know when it is important to just listen.
- Communication is hard work.
- Hone your skills.
- State your thoughts clearly and briefly.
- Remember to smile, not scowl.
- Above all, be reasonable and understanding.
- Be friendly and enthusiastic.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Be human.
- Laugh and grin.

If you had known him, you would recognize that he lived these lessons every day, not only in his medical practice but also in his life, with whomever he came in contact.

The thought expressed by Mother Teresa that “kind words can be short and easy to speak and their echoes are truly endless” resonates with me. But how can kindness translate into business?

Whether you are aware of it or not, no matter what your responsibilities are in the organization, you are in one way or another in sales, and you will be more successful when you try to communicate your ideas when you treat everyone like your best customer. Here are some ways to do that:

- Learn where you fit into your organization. Even if you don't serve customers directly, become familiar with skills that create friendly, professional, and dependable service.
- Answering and responding to all requests quickly shows others you are dependable. Technology makes this easy.
- Create a definition of quality service that has meaning for you.

- Learn to adapt basic customer service skills to the way you treat the “customer” who works alongside you—your co-worker.
- Go the extra mile to help and take the high road. There is less traffic there.
- Courtesy is always and will always be in style.
- Always be prepared.

I hope this book encourages you to take the time to reflect and get inspired about yourself—to look back on your past successes and create a new vision for your future.

Empowerment is very attainable for each of us, as is the feeling of ownership and accomplishment.

Tom Watson, Sr., the former chairman of IBM, knew how to inspire all 67,000 of his employees, and this was before the instant technology we often take for granted today. He carried with him at all times index cards upon which he wrote pertinent things about the people he met—their family, interests, and so on—so he could always remember something personal and friendly to say to them. His kindness to his employees helped build IBM.

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Networking Is a Mindset

When you stand in the checkout line at the grocery store, you probably do like I do and take a quick peek at whatever celebrity story the tabloids are trying to spin, avoid looking at the candy bars seductively sitting on the opposite shelves, and maybe have a casual conversation with the checkout clerk or another person in line: “How do you like that brand?” “Maybe I should try some.” “Getting ready for the holidays?”

People like to chat—even introverts like me. Sometimes you drift into discussing what you do and even exchanging contact information. This casual scenario can happen on a plane, on a park bench, and even waiting to be seated in a restaurant. You make a connection, however brief, and, like a seed, it blooms into something more a year later, three years later, or even longer. I’ve had it happen, and you can, too. Does it mean you’re manipulative or conniving? No. You are connecting. And when you practice connecting, you will find that often something good can come of it. That’s what networking is all about. You come to enjoy it, do it well, and sometimes develop new relationships and opportunities.

Networking is a mindset. It is a strategy for life, a way to create lasting connections and enrich all areas of your life. Networking is 24/7. People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime.

When someone is in your life for a reason, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed. They have come to assist you through a situation, to provide you with guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally, or spiritually. They may even seem like a Godsend—and they are.

Then, without any wrongdoing on your part or at an inconvenient time, the relationship may come to an end. Sometimes the people you've met pass away; sometimes they walk away. Sometimes they act up and force you to take a stand. What you must realize is that your need has been met, your desire fulfilled, and their work is done. This is life, and you must realize it.

Tip 1: Networking Now Is Part of My Life

I have come to think of networking not as something that I have to do. Instead, I look at it as part of my makeup, of who I am. I think, "How can I be a resource to others, give something to them or learn from them?" They are all part of my strategic networking. This can become part of your life strategy as well, and be with you all the time. For instance, think right now about the following:

- Who can you send a note or article to that would give them an idea? Who can you just say hello to?
- What did you learn today from someone you know or someone you met or observed? (By the way, we can even learn from people we don't like or respect. They teach us what *not* to do.)
- Who can you refer today? Maybe you just spoke with a client or friend, and they are looking for a job or opportunity. Maybe you can reach out for an exploratory meeting with someone you have connected with on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Tip 2: Dedicated Networking Always (DNA)

I often say that networking is part of my DNA now. I have learned to look at how to give to others with the sheer honest passion of helping and being open. It does not take much to have this mindset, and it is amazing how opportunities come back over time.

My friend, Elliot DeBear, calls his DNA the "golf network." Here's what he has to say about this subject:

"While I did not realize it at the time, my earliest networking efforts began when I was a caddy at a local country club. The

club members liked my work ethic, how I handled myself on the golf course, and my love of the game. Over time, I got to know the members and they watched me grow up. I gained trust and credibility along the way. As I started to get summer internships, and when my career as a caddy came to a close, I had developed a terrific group of relationships. A group of people who cared about my progress and wanted to see me do well.

“My first full-time job after college was at a major advertising agency, and I was recruited by a club member who was an executive at the firm. Later in life, as I started my own business, I was able to leverage many of my relationships that I had developed on the golf course. This was because of a long-standing trust developed over time. Referrals poured in because of my tremendous golf network. I saw this as a valuable lesson. Stay in touch with those who knew you when you are on your way up and find ways always to help them. Friendships were forged, and from those friendships came more opportunities. It was a win/win all around.

“Golf is my game because it requires a positive attitude, practice, patience, discretion, and a willingness to learn. However, it will work with whatever your game or passion is. Make it a part of your life.”

Tip 3: The ABCs of Networking

I created this list of ABC's as a simple way to remember some tactical and strategic networking actions:

- A Take **action** with a positive **attitude**.
- B **Belong** to groups. **Build** your **brand**.
- C **Connect** with your **contacts consistently** and **cultivate** a relationship.
- D **Deliver** above expectations.
- E **Engage, evolve, and empathize**.
- F Take a **friendly** approach.

- G** Set **goals**. “Go for it.” Show **gratitude**. Be **giving**.
- H** **Humor** and **help** go hand in hand.
- I** Be **interested** and have **integrity**.
- J** **Join** and get involved.
- K** **Keep** in touch and be **kind**.
- L** **Listen** and **learn**.
- M** **Motivate** yourself.
- N** **Niceness** pays.
- O** Ask **open**-ended questions. Take **opportunities**.
- P** **Professionalism** pays. **Practice** it.
- Q** Set your own **quota**.
- R** Be a **resource** and do your **research**.
- S** Be **strategic** and wear a **smile**.
- T** **Timing** is everything. **Trust** is key.
- U** **Understand** others.
- V** Be **versatile**.
- W** **Write** letters and cards.
- X** Do it with love, **XOXO** (or at least like).
- Y** Focus on “**you**”—meaning the other person you are connecting with.
- Z** Have a **zeal** for the possibilities of new and nurtured relationships.

Tip 4: Open Your Eyes—Networking Is All Around

Research tells us that there are at least 200 people who are already a part of your network. Get reacquainted with them. Networking is about creating and developing opportunities through meeting people and

“connecting the dots” among them. The following categories of people can be the beginning of a great networking success story:

- **Customers and clients**—They are the lifeblood of your business. Build trustworthy and positive relationships with them.
- **Suppliers and external partners**—Refer them and stay on their radar screen.
- **Colleagues and co-workers**—Office pals are a powerful resource when networking. Invite a co-worker to lunch or coffee and get to know him or her better. Build your internal alliances consistently.
- **People in your profession**—Helping your competition can actually lead to greater opportunities to grow your business.
- **Alumni and former classmates**—Seize the opportunity to link up with people with whom you might want to reconnect. Linked In and Facebook are perfect for this.
- **Like-minded people**—Expand your horizons. Extracurricular activities introduce you to people with common interest and ambitions, or who share similar life experiences.
- **Neighbors**—Turn a friendly wave into an invaluable conversation. Get to know your neighbors. You can open up the door for a new opportunity.
- **Friends**—Take time to nurture and cultivate your friends. Network with them in a positive way, never with expectations.
- **Family**—Family members can be a great resource for networking opportunities. Think of how you can be helpful to those in your family.
- **People you meet serendipitously**—Be kind to unfamiliar people. Airports, grocery store lines, and waiting rooms are filled with a world of networking opportunities. Keep your ears and eyes open. I learn daily by paying attention to the universe.

Think of people you know who fit in each of these categories. The possibilities for networking are endless. Over time, as you build rapport and trust, these relationships lead to other contacts, partnerships, and opportunities.

Tip 5: Think Motivation M.A.G.I.C.

Take the following steps to continually work a bit of M.A.G.I.C. into your life:

- M** What the **mind** can believe, the mind can achieve. It starts with your own self-talk. Self-talk is your inner voice, the little voice that plays in our head 24/7. Be uplifting and think about the best you have to offer. I once heard it said that depending on our self-talk, we are either in the construction or destruction business.
- A** **Attitude** is everything! Our attitude is our choice, and sometimes it's a challenge to stay positive. When our personal foundation is a good attitude, it lends strength to everything else we build on it.
- G** Set **goals** and go for them. Keep your eye on your dream and work hard to achieve it. Write down your goals and keep them somewhere you will see them.
- I** Have **integrity** in all you do. A great reputation takes time to develop and can be destroyed in seconds. *Honesty* is the first word in the dictionary of virtues. You start by being true to yourself and making promises you know you will keep.
- C** **Care** about others. Reach out to them. It is a sign of your inner strength when you take the first step to help someone. Make someone else's life a little better—it comes back to you in ways unimaginable. That gratification is sure to lift your spirits.

Steve, another self-proclaimed introvert, ran into a high-powered executive at his global financial services firm. She suggested he stop by her office to catch up. He did not think she was really serious and felt too shy and uncertain to pursue the opportunity. They ran into each other on another occasion and, again, she suggested he visit her office. Yet again he failed to visit and did not even send a thank-you note because he did not want to appear intrusive or too pushy. Later at a meeting, she joined him and a colleague, who raved about Steve's work. She replied, "Really? I can't seem get him on my calendar!"

This time he took the cue and asked for her assistant's name and immediately scheduled a meeting. When they finally met, the meeting went well, and they have continued a regular dialogue since. Now Steve is able to bring his ideas to one of the highest levels of the firm.

What did he realize from this experience? Follow up immediately, always send a thank-you note, and do not "self-negotiate" one's way out of an opportunity to make a connection.

Have a goal and an action plan for every encounter. This is a huge advantage for someone with a consistent networking-aware mind. You'll be prepared and ready to follow up easily and efficiently. I leave my home daily with a specific goal for meeting or nurturing my working network and for each meeting I have planned. I am then ready to follow up with every serendipitous encounter, as well as those I have planned in advance. If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there. Set a positive intention daily to build and nurture your network.

Tip 6: Networking Becomes Comfortable Over Time

Networking is now more comfortable to me. It was not always so, until I realized that it is just a way of maintaining good connections with people. Now I see many opportunities that unfold when I have my ears, eyes, and mind open. Just like a parachute, they all work better when open. Think of each person you meet as a friend, client, prospect, or someone who could be one of these over time.

Tip 7: Opportunities Are Everywhere

Too often opportunities arrive disguised, and you might neglect to take the action step. Instead of saying to yourself, "I wish," "I will," "I want," or "I should," replace this with "Do it now instead of tomorrow."

A double opportunity recently developed from a speech I gave at a Chamber of Commerce meeting ten years ago. I received an email from a global organization asking me to present at an upcoming meeting. When I found out who referred me, I reached out to the managing

director of the firm, whom I had not met, from the Chamber of Commerce meeting and said thank you for the recommendation to his global association. Tony Torchia of RotenbergMeril was stunned that I called to thank him since we had never actually met. This was ten years later. We did finally meet when I presented, and afterward I wanted to take him to lunch to say thank you. We had a lovely lunch, and he invited two colleagues. The “thank-you” lunch turned out to be a sales opportunity and another project. Double tip on this opportunity. Always find out your first source of any referral and say thank you, and then follow up again with either a coffee or lunch. You never know what will develop unless you reach out.

I love when people reach out to me because it always proves to be some type of opportunity. A year ago, I received an email from a 16-year-old high school student named Nicole, who contacted me to learn how to network in high school to maximize her experience and start to prepare for college. I was impressed with her, and we have stayed in touch on and off. Just last month, Nicole reached out again since her family moved to Texas and she now wanted to know how to get involved in psychology clubs—again, to get herself prepared for college. I asked Nicole how she knew to initially reach out to me. It turns out that her father was one of my drivers from a car service I use to go to the airport. He and I talked one day during a ride, and he told me about his very bright and ambitious daughter. I told him to have her reach out to me and I would try to help her—and she actually did.

Remember to reach out to people and follow up.

Tip 8: An Exercise in Attitude

Try this attitude exercise. Great client service requires you to be thoughtful and appreciative throughout the business development process. Clients assume that you will thank them after you have done business. Here are a few “attitude of gratitude” thoughts to deliver in all your business relationships:

- **Go beyond surface information.** Learn as much as you can about all your contacts and connections.

- **You must have “heart.”** People make decisions with both their head and heart. Keep feelings in mind. It is the personal relationship that keeps you in good graces.
- **Give thanks for bad news as well as good.** We usually celebrate successful wins and let clients know how much their business means to us. Yet when we lose an order or a piece of business, we don't. We may feel paralyzed by the loss. Even with a rejection, show appreciation by sending a note of thanks for their time and consideration. You may be surprised by the outcome.

Tip 9: Act on Things Immediately

As an effective time manager, I act on things immediately because I know that tomorrow I will have ten more things I must do. Take things step-by-step, and do what you say you will as part of your brand building. This way, you will be known for following up and following through.

I'll never forget the voice mail message I received from a financial advisor named Michelle who had enjoyed my first book on networking and said that she had learned a lot of things that she had never considered before. She was so surprised that I called her back—yet follow-up is one of the best practices of essential networking. Over time, she introduced me to a woman named Annmarie Woods of Mainstay Investments. We met and started working together later and became great friends. Over the years, from that one phone call and follow-up, I have worked with many people at Annmarie's firm and with other colleagues who left to join other firms. It is *all* about the follow-up.

Tip 10: Manage Your Time

Get up ten minutes early and be productive right away. You'll be surprised to discover how much time you have created through those extra minutes during which you can start a project, connect online, write a handwritten note to someone in your network, read a book, or do some exercise.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How much of my time is spent with clients or people in my network?
- Do I confirm appointments?
- Is my paperwork done completely and correctly?
- Do I plan and practice my presentations in advance?
- Am I willing to meet with people at their convenience instead of mine?
- Do I frequently take productive coffee and lunch meetings with the people in my network?

Help yourself by performing the following tasks:

- List a couple ways you don't use your time as effectively as you could.
- Explain how you could be more productive with your time.

Don't get caught up in the Five Emotional Time Wasters: indecision, guilt, worry, perfectionism, and procrastination. Time is your best friend and also your biggest enemy. It keeps moving, so use it wisely. Sometimes you have to slow down to follow up properly. Don't multi-task. When you do two things at once, it is hard to do either very well. Direct your attention and concentration toward the moment and the task at hand. It will be hard at first, yet as you complete each task, it will go faster, and you won't have to stop and go back to correct the mistakes that happen when you try doing several things at once. Don't believe me? Think of the last time you were on the phone while checking email at the same time. Were you able to answer and respond to each task efficiently and with the attention it deserved? Also, when someone steps into your office or meets with you, stop what you are doing and pay attention. Here is a tip: I always say, "How much time do we need right now?"

Tip 11: Things to Do

Keep your “to-do” list short and do the items on it. This way, you will have a sense of accomplishment. I keep my list on an app on my phone. We all have fantastic systems right in our hand to help us keep track of things. Some items can and will be put on hold. I like to keep my list short and to the point.

Set aside chunks of time to do the tasks. Batch your emails, calls, texts, and LinkedIn communications and even your note-writing time. It is amazing what you can accomplish in only 10 to 15 minutes of productive time. I have known people who have mastered a new language by studying only 15 minutes a day consistently over time. Until you have done it, don’t disbelieve it!

Here are my friend Lawrence Peters’ thoughts about the courtesy of replying to an email:

“In our fast-paced world, often the reality is that people don’t reply and leave us hanging. Take the time to quickly hit Reply and at least give a status if you don’t have the full information. Sometimes it is easier to pick up the phone—the main goal is that if someone requires an answer, reply to them as soon as you can.”

Tip 12: Time Action Tips to Do Now

1. Write daily, *specific, measurable outcomes* you want to achieve.
2. Every day review top projects and what can be done to move them closer to fruition.
3. Set your priorities—what is urgent and needs to be done now?
4. Periodically, ask yourself, “Is what I am doing now the most important thing I can be doing at this time?”
5. Establish place habits. “A place for everything and everything in its place.” It keeps you organized.
6. Create systems for forms, check lists, and repetitive tasks. Technology makes this easy.

7. Complete what you start. Leave nothing unfinished.
8. One hour of planning will save three hours of execution.
9. Develop a “do it now” approach. *Eliminate indecision.*
10. Pre-plan each week and allocate time to perform necessary functions.
11. At the end of each day, create a carry-over list of items that were not accomplished. Keep your time log and list going so you can refer back to the undone items.
12. Regularly analyze your use of time. Adapt and adjust when required to improve your efficiency and productivity.

Tip 13: It’s Not Who You Know, It’s Who You Thank

Although an entire industry has developed around motivating people through appreciation, it ultimately boils down to what our parents taught us: Say “thank you” to everyone. This may seem like simple etiquette, yet it is amazing what saying thank you can do for your business and personal relationships. When we express our appreciation to clients, co-workers, employees, and friends, their attitudes are positively affected, and positive attitudes impact business and personal success.

An effective way to say thank you is with a gift, because not only is it an expression of gratitude, but it also serves as a reminder, keeping you in the thoughts of others so that they will contact you again. At the end of my training seminars and presentations, I like to stay in touch with the people who I have connected with. One way I do that is to send a small gift right after the program, and then follow up at least every three months with tokens of appreciation to keep my name in front of them.

One year, my holiday thank-you gift to many of my clients and business friends was a light bulb-shaped glass filled with mints, imprinted with, “A world of thanks,” and it included my name. People can continually refill and use the bulb, and I often still see it on people’s desks. It does have a long shelf life.

Other people require a more personalized thank you. In many cases, I take the time to find gifts that fit specific interests. For instance, I know that one client is a cat lover, so I found a wonderful crystal cat for him. Another client loves a certain restaurant, and I gave her a gift certificate. The point is to consider what people will appreciate most.

Tip 14: Face Problems with Innovation

Here's an exercise for thinking "innovation" when facing a challenge:

1. Replace the word *problem* with the word *challenge* in your life.
2. Define what the challenge is. (For instance, I have a prospect who keeps putting off our appointment.)
3. Prepare three suggestions to meet the challenge.
4. Write down what part of the challenge you can affect and what part you can't.
5. Prepare an action plan to meet the challenge. (For instance, I can change the place of the appointment and meet the prospect for lunch; I can show up at the appointed time no matter what and say that I forgot he had rescheduled; I can show up unexpectedly and say I was in the neighborhood; I can put off the next appointment, putting the control back in my hands.)
6. Put the plan into action.

Tip 15: Never Forget Those Who Help You

Remembering those who help you is the life blood of true networking and relationships. As my good friend James Palazza (one of the world's best salespeople and relationship builders) says, "I live by this rule. Always remember those who go out of their way for you."

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