

Accelerated One-on-One Networking Appointments

By Melissa McGavick, WBN Cranberry Chapter Member, WBN President of the Board 2009 -2010

You've joined WBN and now you want to make the most of your membership. The meeting is only 60-90 minutes and often everyone has to run right after the meeting. So how do you get to know everyone? The most effective way to get to know the members of your chapter is to meet with them each one-on-one.

The purpose of the meetings is to learn how you can do business together and how you can most effectively refer each other more often. Personally I like to more slow approach to getting to know a person. Due to the nature of networking groups, the fast pace of business and fact each person has only so much time you may choose to use a method designed to accelerate your getting to know each other. The one-to-one appointment that is too the point and all business is all the rage in some networking circles. It is the business equivalent to speed dating. This is a brief tutorial on that method.

Before the Meeting, accelerated one-on-one business meetings require a bit of homework ahead of time. You can help each other out with this by providing a list of questions already answered. By typing out these answers one time, you can share it with each person you meet with. This saves you telling the same 15 minutes of information about you with each of the 20 members in your group. That adds up to 5 hours. If each of you does this you can get more deeply into conversation more quickly. When you have both had the opportunity to read each other's information you can come prepared to ask more in depth questions or even exchange potential leads. One caveat with this method, only type out information you do not mind if the world would find out about it. No company secrets or tell all novels here. You do not know where the piece of paper may be left behind or accidentally forwarded to.

So what type of information do you want to share? Share the type of information that would be written up in an executive bio. She went to school (at Harvard). She worked (at NASA). She currently heads up (the stiletto design division). She lives in (general area). In her free time she (knits hats for cats). Her company is (the leading gizmo manufacturer). She has been responsible for a (1000 percent increase in sales/productivity). Her best clients have these (issues). People she would like to be introduced to are (the owner of her ideal client company).

Set up the details and logistics of your meeting including place, starting and ending time. Decide if you will be having coffee or a meal, or nothing. Adding a meal adds to the time and expense required.

During the actual meeting confirm you are still on the same schedule and split the time evenly. Set a timer – there's one on your cell phone. If you are together for 30 minutes, each of you is the focus for 15 minutes. Skip the how's the weather on your street questions and get to the point. Ask questions and confirm you understand what she does. This list of questions will get you started.

Why you are in the business you are in?
What are your areas of expertise in business and in life?
What do you like best about what you do?
What are your successes so far in business and in life?
What are your ambitions in life?
What are your hobbies?

What other organizations do you belong to?
What people do you serve the best, the least?
What people would you like to be introduced to?
What trends do you see in your industry?
What challenges are you facing in your business?
How can I help you?

At the end of the meeting, decide if any follow up needs to occur. Of course, the ideal would be each of you being able to help each other equally with multiple leads each meeting. However reality is that it may be that one of you can help the other person more. It is normal and it all comes out in the wash. I may be able to give a lead to Mary, who gives a lead to Anita, who gives as a lead to Laura, who gave a lead to me.

I encourage you to spend more time with each other than a quick 30 minute meeting but this will help you get a jump start to your formalized networking within your chapter. When time permits, slow down and get to really know each other.



About the Author: Melissa McGavick is President of McGavick Interactive Training, and a professional public speaker. Typically she works with successful business people who want to develop their public speaking and communication skills, leadership potential, and sell their ideas or products more effectively. She can be reached at by phone at 412-400-3414. More information is available at www.mcgavick.net.

Melissa has served as a Chapter Rep and Chapter Chair of the Cranberry WBN chapter, chaired ten different WBN committees, served as both Vice-President (2008-2009) and President (2009-2010) of the WBN Board of Directors. In 2008 she was selected as the WBN Woman of the Year. Melissa has also served in the top leadership positions in four other non-profit organizations, including the Pittsburgh chapter of the Downtown Women's Club, Women Entrepreneurs in Business, Women Think P.I.N.K., and Toastmasters International District 13.

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