

Title:

How to Start a Business Relationship, Even if You are Painfully Shy and Hate People

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The Ultimate Online & Offline Response Follow Up Tool

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Course ONE: Response Synergy -- The Ultimate Online & Offline Response Follow Up Tool

To build your business, you've got to build your business relationships. I said it now, I've said it before, and I'll say it again throughout this course. Don't worry about building your business, worry about building your relationships and your business will build itself. There are all kinds of easy, even automatic, things you can do to build a relationship and I'll get into those in later lessons. First, though, you need to have a relationship before you can develop it into something profitable. How do you do that? How do you do that when you don't have the time, energy, or gift of gab? As for the first two, all I can say is this: if you don't think you have the time or energy now to start and build a business relationship, fine. Don't. You'll have plenty of energy and time later, when you don't have any business. As for not being a "people person" or being shy about talking to new people, I'll show you how to make this part as painless as possible.

The first thing to do when thinking about starting a business relationship is to decide who you want to have one with -- narrow the pool of potential clients. It may sound counterintuitive, but it's like pruning a tree. Sometimes you have to cut some new growth to make the whole tree stronger. Besides, that's just less people you have to worry about talking to. Additionally, once you do this, you may discover that you have no problem connecting with and talking to these people because you have something in common -- your business. Which brings me to the two easiest ways ever to start a business relationship: networking lunch and professional activities.

The networking lunch (sometimes it's a breakfast) is the easiest single way to

meet potential clients and client referral sources ever. At it's least painful, you walk into a restaurant, sit down at a table with a couple of strangers, plopp down your business cards, eat lunch, listen to a speaker, then leave after collecting the business cards of others. Of course, this is not the most efficient use of your time; things tend to work out better if you chat with the people you are sitting with. Usually, these things have a meet and greet time before the meal is actually served, and that's a good time to chat with people and pass around your business cards. Sure you have to interact with people, maybe even strangers, but it actually is much easier than it seems because everything there is out in the open. That is, people are expecting you to talk about yourself and your business and hand them your business card. You must, of course, return the favor, and allow them to do the same. In that regard, here's a tip that will make it easier for you to work the room: talk less, listen more. Most people will assume you are interested in them and think better of you for being so, and most people will assume you are interesting and intelligent until you prove otherwise.

If you are not involved in an industry or professional organization, tear yourself away from this lesson and join one or even two or three, now. I'll wait. OK, good. Not only is it a great thing to join such a group in terms of keeping up with your business, it is a fantastic way to generate business. The better known you are in your industry, the more likely you are to get the business that someone else is conflicted out of or doesn't have time or the ability to do. Further, people who are ancillary to your industry, but crucial for getting business are likely to attend these things. For instance, an estate planning attorney might be part of the Southern Arizona Estate Planning Council, an industry group that meets once a month for a dinner lecture. At dinner, that attorney will probably sit with other attorneys, CPAs, life insurance professionals, and financial advisors. All those people are sources of business for the attorney and vice versa.

Industry and professional groups, to be effective, usually require a little more than the average networking lunch. If you want anyone to take your business card, and actually do something with it besides throw it away, you need to make yourself known, and trusted, to the group. Volunteer for something. Speak at a lunch, write an article for the newsletter, donate meeting space. Do something besides just attend (though that's better than nothing). When you do those things, you won't have to worry about trying to talk to people; they'll be clamoring to talk to you. A correlation to joining industry and professional groups and attending their events is participating in their online activities. Almost every group has a listserv or a message board; contribute to it. This is probably actually the easiest single way to meet business referral sources -- even easier than the networking lunch.

Once you meet someone and decide you want to start a relationship with them, follow up right away. The next day is best, but within three days is crucial. Nothing elaborate is needed here, just a quick e-mail or phone call mentioning that it was nice talking to them and you'd like to meet again. Be sure to ask to meet again. If you promised some sort of information, be sure to deliver it. After the quick call or e-mail, send a note card with your business card inside, repeating yourself. It's a good sign if they follow up with you too, mentioning that they were just about to call or e-mail you, but if you don't hear anything, don't freak out. Relationship building is a slow process, give it time. Move on to the next contact.

Read our other courses on: What to Do at a Meeting with a Potential Client and How To Follow Up on the Meeting; How Best to Remain in Contact with Your Client and How to Keep Your Client Happy in the Relationship at <http://www.responsesynergy.com>

All the best, Wolf Krammel