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BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

The Networking Funnel

Helpful Instructions

Purpose: This facilitation exercise is designed to help participants gain better insight into the value of relationships.

Note To Presenter: This program is designed to be used with a flyer or PowerPoint presentation.

(Put the title slide on the PPT on the screen.)

Let's begin by talking about Know, Like and Trust. What do these features in a relationship mean to the ability of networkers to create value in their network? *(Get audience participation.)*

Answer: Know, Like and Trust are important to the exchange of quality profitable referrals. What can you achieve in networking without these features? *(Get audience participation – but don't dally on this point since your audience will likely get it already.)*

Answer: Without these features in a networking relationship, little can be achieved.

To build a relationship that includes Know, Like and Trust takes regular contact, positive experiences, and references to competence and character from others outside the direct relationship you have with a network contact. The more time you have with a network contact and the more they hear about you from others, the more likely they are to give you quality profitable referrals.

What kinds of networking organizations can provide you and your network contact with the opportunity to build Know, Like and Trust? *(Move to the next slide of the PPT – the blank funnel.)* Let's classify them in order of frequency of meeting since regular contact with your network is important.

Note To Presenter: There may be some discussion of which category a particular event or group fits into. Don't let the audience dwell on this; it's not important to the point of the presentation. The point is that the more often you see someone and the better the program design of the organization for relationship development, the more productive that organization will be in building a profitable network. Also, a straight read through of this script takes about ten minutes. So plan on filling any remaining time with your own stories and audience participation.

Occasional Networking Events are quarterly to annual in frequency. *(Click the PPT to bring in the first animation.)*

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They tend to have large attendance and happen in varying locations. Can you give me a few examples of Occasional Networking Events? (*Get audience participation in listing some events.*) CONES, and LinkedIn based events like a LinkedWorking or LinkedColumbus are examples of Occasional Networking Events.

At Occasional Networking Events you can meet lots of people and touch base with existing network contacts, but these events tend not to be the time to build deep relationships. These events are great for scouting for new network contacts, getting and giving a first impressions, and then following up with the contact if you are both interested in getting to know each other better.

Remember, you aren't likely to get business from a new contact at a first meeting. The key to successfully building your network with large infrequent events is follow-up. You need to meet again with the people you meet at these events. Take them to lunch. Visit their office. Inquire about their products or services. Take the time to build a relationship with someone and it will likely pay off.

Monthly Networking Meetings are the next step down The Networking Funnel. (*Click the PPT to bring in the next animation.*)

Attendance at these events is often still quite large but could be just a regular lunch meeting with five to twelve people. Locations may still vary month to month, and attendees are likely to vary as well. Can you give me some examples of Monthly Networking Meetings? (*Get audience participation in listing some events.*) MORE Meetings, Big Fish, Positive Connections, and Business First Breakfasts are examples of Monthly Networking Meetings.

Monthly Networking Meetings can be much the same as less frequent events in what they offer and what you can gain by attending. You can meet lots of people and touch base with existing network contacts, but these events still tend not to be the time to build deep relationships. Personally organized lunches can be better at this, but often the long gaps between them means the attendees vary and thus there may not be as much shoulder-rubbing with potential network contacts as is needed to build Know, Like and Trust. Thus, follow-up is still key to generating referral opportunities.

Affinity Groups are really a twist on the other kinds of the networking opportunities we are discussing today. (*Click the PPT to bring in the next animation.*)

An Affinity Group's meetings may have features like those we've already discussed or are going to discuss next, but add the feature that it is a group of people with whom you have something in common already when you join. Can you give me some examples of Affinity Groups? (*Get audience participation in listing some groups.*) A region or town, a charity or philanthropic interest, an industry, a prior employer, or a hobby are all examples. Really, the AmSpirit MORE

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Meetings are affinity groups since most of the attendees are members of AmSpirit Business Connections.

At this point, I'd like to point out the little characters on the screen along side The Networking Funnel. Note that as they move down the funnel they get closer together. This is of course intentional; they show the effect of the funnel metaphor. As we move down the funnel, we see our network connections more often, and under circumstances that allow us to more easily build Know, Like and Trust in order to create a more productive network. Essentially, we get closer to our connections as we attend events that are further down the funnel.

Weekly Tips Groups So what's better than Occasional Networking Events, Monthly Networking Meetings and Affinity Groups for building Know, Like and Trust? (*Click the PPT to bring in the next animation.*). These are really the best since they are the most frequent, tend to be exclusive of internal competition, and are designed to maximize interaction of members.

Can you give me some examples of Weekly Tips Groups? (*Get audience participation in listing some groups.*) Gold Star, BNI, LeTip, The Right Connection, and my favorite, AmSpirit Business Connections are all examples of organizations designed to do what we've been talking about.

By bringing people together regularly with meeting structures and programs specifically designed to form deeper relationships, Weekly Tips Groups allow members to easily build Know, Like and Trust.

(*Click the PPT to bring in the last animation.*) These relationships result in opportunities for sales, business partnerships, long term friendships and even marriages between members (although I don't recommend expecting to find your soul mate at a meeting.) Never underestimate the power of a well designed and run networking organization. Does anyone have a quick story of an A+ referral or something out of the box that happened because of your Weekly Tips Group? (*Get audience participation in telling a story or two.*)

It should be noted here that the power of the Weekly Tips Group should not discount the other groups as powerless or useless. The other events and groups are useful for meeting new people en masse, checking them out on a first impression basis, and scheduling to get together with them in the future. A networking event of any sort can count as one of many sales "touches" (of which conventional wisdom says it takes 7 to close a sale.) Also, running into people you have met before or even known a long time allows you to easily continue a relationship or add value by introducing them to someone or helping them in some way.

But my favorite use for networking events other than my Weekly Tips Group is searching for guests and potential members for my Weekly Tips Group. While attending other networking

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events, be on the lookout for good people to pull down The Networking Funnel in order to bring them closer to you. Doing so adds value to your relationship and allows you to build that relationship without necessarily overtly doing so. Rather than asking someone to have lunch with you (and only you) when they don't know you well, ask them to bring twenty cards and come give their 30-second commercial at your networking group. If they join, they are much more likely to bring you success.

Questions?

NOTE: This program was developed by Duff Dyer, Central Ohio Director.