

## Networking: what's your elevator pitch?

Do you look forward to networking events or would you rather tidy your sock drawer? For some people networking is a lot of fun while for others it's an ordeal. Yet it's a given that networking helps you put your business out there and keeps you in touch with leads and new ideas.

So... you've responded to the email from your local Chamber of Commerce inviting you to their next after 5 business networking event. The room is crowded and buzzing. You have a glass in your hand, a smile on your face and 30 seconds before the gaze of the person you're speaking with starts to drift.



One thing that can help is being confident you can say what makes your business special. This is sometimes called the 'elevator pitch', because you should be able to deliver it to a hypothetical stranger in a lift between the time the doors close on the ground floor and the time they open again on the top floor ('lift pitch' has somehow never caught on). You want something short, sparky and persuasive so your listener asks 'tell me more'. You can use elevator pitches in different situations. You might use one internally in your business to fire up your team about a new project. In a networking situation, use it to reach out to a prospective customer or collaborator, so they know what you do and what your business can offer them.

When you know you're going to a networking event, think about what you say when you meet people:



- What's your goal? Do you want to tell potential customers about your business? Do you have a great new product or service you want to introduce?
- What do you do? What's the customer point of view on your business? How does it make their life easier or better? If you can lay out some numbers showing the value in what you do, all the better (though don't overdo it)
- Whom do you do it for? Is there a key market, such as builders or healthcare professionals? Can you refine this, maybe by specifying the scale of the businesses you serve ('small to medium sized') or characterising them by the challenges they face - 'time-poor small business owners'?
- Why should they care? What problem can you solve? Try phrases like 'who are looking for' or 'so they can'. Focus on how your business helps people and say which people. For example, 'we develop apps for businesses with roving staff who need easy access to client and financial information'
- What makes you different? This is your unique selling proposition (USP). Why are you the better choice? Does your business offer something truly one of a kind or is your USP a combination of quality, service and/or convenience?

Think about how you say it, as much as what you say. Say it out loud until it feels natural. Make sure you feel good about it. If what you do excites you, chances are others will respond to that.

The next step? Listen. Ask questions. Don't let your eyes wander, checking for someone more interesting. That's a first impression you don't want to create. The elevator pitch is where you can make that important first connection. After that, you have a chance to deepen the connection and build a relationship as your next phase of networking.

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## Efficiency gains

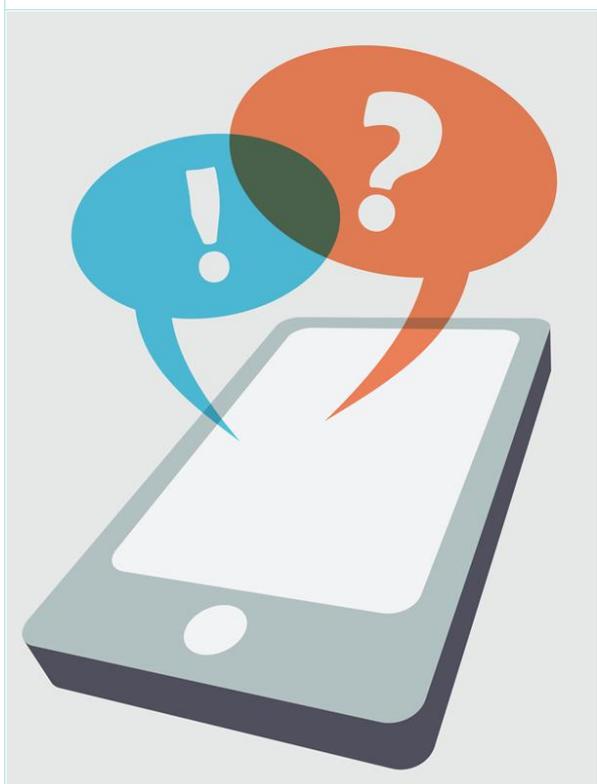
When it comes to working efficiently, everyone has some idea of what works for them and what could work better. As a business owner, you can get stuck and find yourself working harder than anyone else, for longer hours, without seeing that next level of growth in your business. Here are some simple reminders to help you stay on task and get more done.

### Make a list

Seems like a cliché, right? But writing down your goals for that day actually does set you up to achieve them. And there's that little reward at the end of the day - better than a sugar fix - when you tick off what you've completed.

### Avoid Multitasking

Many people think they can multi task. They're wrong. To achieve efficiency it is always best to tackle one task at a time giving it your complete attention. Trying to multi task only leads to distraction, rather than faster production times. By spending time on one task alone, better quality is assured and fewer mistakes are made.



### Interrupt the interruptions

OK, sometimes you do have to drop everything to attend to an emergency. Mostly interruptions just cost you time and energy, whittling away your focus till it's hard to feel you're achieving anything. Work out a system with your team to flag anything urgent clearly and to telescope everything else into one or two windows in the day. Does first and last appointment of the day work for you? Just before or just after lunch? Pick times that suit the flow of your day so you can focus fully during your most productive periods while still giving your team the direction they need.

And here's radical: turn your phone off and shut your email. It might feel like you've gone off life support but set yourself two or three periods in the day where you return calls and emails. You can judge whether you missed anything important and measure how much more you achieved.

### Delegate

Trying to be a champion in the workplace only leads to lost productivity. Don't try and achieve everything yourself, you'll only end up risking burnout. When you have a lot on your plate, stop for a moment and break each task down. Think about who might better carry out each bit. This empowers others to contribute and allows you to complete the tasks best suited to you, in record time.

### Communicate

Before sending an email around to staff, put some time and effort into the message itself. Poor communication will only waste time, especially if you have to explain yourself further or find your email has had a negative impact due to some perceived overtone you didn't intend. Craft your communication purposefully to make it clear what you want the outcome to be and what you want from your team. State the priority and clarify deadlines. You may need to set a date to follow up, to ensure that the message has been put into action.

Ask whether email is the most efficient medium for the situation. If your team is all onsite, you might find it works better to call them all together for a quick catch up, to outline the assignment and timeframe and give them the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any information. Just be sure to keep the meeting to the specific agenda.

***'When you've made a delivery, that's when you begin to build the relationship for the next sale.'***

**from Little Red Book of Sales Answers, Jeffrey Gitomer**



### Is Facebook right for your business?

The world of social media has come a long way in recent years and Facebook, in order to stay at the top of its game, has taken the phenomenon one step further. Offering strategic marketing solutions, paid advertising and even the option to sell retail online, Facebook has created a portal for businesses to get their name out in the marketplace with ease and in real-time.

Perhaps you've thought about having a Facebook page for your own business? Here are just some of the key benefits that may help to sway your decision.

The initial set up is completely free of charge and so too is posting or inviting people to like your page. This means you can let your audience know what you're up to, new products or services on offer and you can also interact with clients on particular issues where you want to gauge opinion.

Facebook takes this a step further though by offering paid posting options, which allow businesses to expand the target audience by paying a fee. For example, any unpaid posts will only show up in the feed of people who already follow your page. Paid posts on the other hand, will promote your page to people who are not currently followers of your business page. This fee is completely up to you and can range anywhere from \$5 upwards. You can choose how long you want to run your advertising for, whether it be for one day or ongoing for a chosen length of time or you can simply set a maximum marketing budget and allow the advertisement to run until this amount has been spent.

One of the most exciting aspects to Facebook marketing is the ability to specify and hone in on a particular market by narrowing it down to different demographics, age groups, cities, gender and even down to particular interests.

Facebook is a quick way to let people know you're out there and what it is your business does. The viral nature of social media means those who like it and share it will instantly pass it on to friends and so forth. With over a billion users worldwide, this provides your business with the potential to reach and expand your market with ease.

Facebook for businesses is a fast growing, effective marketing tool but it's not for everyone. Take the time to establish whether a Facebook business page is right for you. Look at your competitors and check in on your target market to see how they respond to the idea. Do your research first and ensure there are people on your team who can manage the page appropriately.

*'Networking allows you to pick up ideas, energy, and information from other people, in fact, you expand your world just through being seen.'*

from *What Your Accountant Doesn't Tell You*, Fiona Clayton-Law

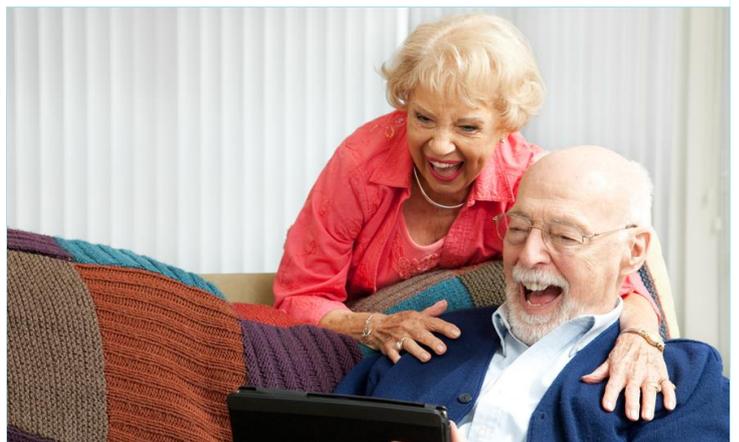
### Facing up to customers

When you're doing your market research, where are you drawing your data from?

- The customers you meet face to face when they buy your products or use your services
- The people who respond to your blog
- Customers or prospects who send queries or feedback to your website
- People who entered the last in-store or online competition you ran
- Any marketing surveys, whether you've run them yourself or had access to the data
- The Facebook pages of the customers you know best

Where do your products or services fit in to their lives? Do they make them easier or more enjoyable? Do they meet an essential need?

You can drown in data sometimes but it is worth taking the time to look at what data you have and think about what it says about your customers and the lives they lead. It can help you think about how you want to connect with customers from your own Facebook page.



## ENGINE ROOM

### FYI...

Never forget that when people buy a drill, they are fulfilling their need for a hole. The drill is merely the means to an end.

### Are you promoting drills or holes?



## Netiquette - Do's and Don'ts for Facebook .....

### DO

#### Post regularly

Before you even write anything online, establish a strategy for your posts first and foremost. How often are you going to post? What will be the subject of each post? Don't attempt to post daily, if you're not sure you're going to have anything to say. At the same time, don't overload your readers with too much information. Like unsubscribing from emails, they will quickly 'unfollow' your page.

#### Respond to comments

If you were to have a conversation with someone in person, would you simply ignore him or her? Probably not. The same applies to cyberspace. Be polite, ask questions and encourage interaction. Not only is this a great way to find out about your target market, but the more interaction on your page, the more likely your organic reach is likely to be.

### DON'T

#### Be desperate

Don't straight out ask for likes and shares. Encourage people to like and follow your page in a more subtle way. Though it doesn't hurt to acknowledge when you reach a milestone, such as 100, 200 or even 1,000 likes. In a way, you're showing the world of Facebook users how well you're doing.

#### Be all about the business

Don't just post about business. Have some fun. For every two business related posts, throw a light-hearted, unrelated post in the middle and try to link it back to your business in some way. This builds rapport and can also reach out to those from outside your current market.

### An Important Message

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.



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