

The Business Connector

A Quarterly Newsletter from AmSpirit™ Business Connections

The Power of One

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It is time to beef up our network. We grab the newspaper and begin to identify events that might be fertile ground to sow our networking seeds – chamber events, free seminars, and trade association meetings.

Armed with a pocketful of business cards, we arrive at the first target-laden event and set our plan in motion. Like Cinderella trying to beat the stroke of midnight, we zealously move through the room, introducing ourselves to anyone with whom we happen to make meaningful eye contact.

Despite the fact that the day after the event we follow up with everyone we met – carefully reminding him or her of who we are and what we do – in time we discover that our efforts generate us approximately nothing.

That is all right. We are undeterred. We stay the course and stick to our plan.

At the next event, we work even harder and attempt to connect with even more people. Again, however, nothing comes from our efforts. Nevertheless, we continue. We continue until at some point we get discouraged and abort our original plan.

Although we continue to attend the networking events, we stop our torrid pace of mingling. Instead, we become satisfied only conversing with a few individuals having similar interests.

Then a curious thing happens. The less we “work the room” for a plentitude of acquaintances, the more we start to generate productive networking relationships.

This is not a function of patience or “paying our dues.” It has nothing to do with luck, karma, or divine intervention. It comes down to simple math.

To illustrate, consider the Indian proverb: “An eagle that tries to catch two rabbits, catches none.” An eagle attempting to grab hold of two rabbits must split its focus. When split, its diluted focus is not enough to seize either rabbit. The eagle gets nothing for its effort.

The same is true of networking. If we attempt to create networking relationships with too many people at once, all our efforts will likely fail. Why? The more people we focus upon, the more diluted our focus for developing a networking relationship with any one person becomes.

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Developing a productive networking relationship hinges entirely on the quality of the relationship. It has nothing to do with the quantity of individuals with whom we attempt to network.

How many people are too many upon which to focus? It depends. It depends on the people with whom we are networking. It depends on what we are networking to obtain.

The appropriate number is not known

and probably is different for each of us. What is certain, however, is that only one is not too many and that focusing on one person at a time can be an extremely powerful strategy in the long run.

Consider this: we meet one person and focus on developing a relationship with him or her, i.e., meetings, lunch and other significant interactions. The next month we do the same, adding to our first relationship. And then the next month we do it again, and so on.

In a year, we have a dozen new networking relationships. Actually the number is much higher as those 12 have infiltrated us into their networks.

Can only a single new networking relationship make a difference for us? Absolutely. Consider Walt Disney: He toiled for months at trade events, attempting to find a venue to show his cartoon featuring a mouse. The net result of Disney’s unfocused contact with dozens of industry professionals was zero.

Then, at one trade event, Disney got discouraged. He unintentionally became engaged in conversation with a single individual – Harry Reichenbach. To make a long story short, Reichenbach offered Disney a two-week showing of *Steamboat Willie* at his theatre. This break launched Walt Disney Studios and made Mickey Mouse a household name.

Next time you attend a networking event, remember that the key to building a productive new networking relationships rests with *The Power of One*. ✓