

The Business Connector

A Quarterly Newsletter from AmSpirit™ Business Connections

Box The Room

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We know that no matter our business, we are much further ahead devoting our time, energy and talents towards existing clients rather than focusing them on attracting new ones. By focusing our attention on our current stable of paying customers, we benefit by becoming more effective at serving them and are in a better position to sell them more.

How do we know this? Certainly business experts for years have told us this in countless publications and programs. More importantly, however, this has been our experience.

While in our hearts we know that existing clients are the highest and best use of our resources, our intuition tells us to always be open to attracting new ones.

This instinct serves us well. After all, no business environment is stable. Clients go out of business. Clients are acquired. They occasionally change vendors. And they have been known to bring in-house the services you once offered.

It is a fact that existing clients are the backbone of any great business. New clients, however, are vital to the long-term health of a business.

The same is true of our network. Strong existing relationships make for a great network. New relationships, however, are vital to the long-term health of a network.

While we hope that our relationships last a lifetime, we know that they do not. The people within our network move. And people within our network pass away. Some people in our network just start to run in different circles. Meeting new

people should be an important part of our ongoing networking activities.

For many of us, however, meeting new people is an anxious situation. Whether we are introduced or we introduce ourselves, we are plunged into having to initiate and maintain interesting conversation with someone we know very little (if anything) about. In short, meeting new people can be a daunting task.

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Making chitchat with someone new does not have to be a daunting task, however. The key to easing our anxiety is simply in our approach. We need to adopt the mindset that making small talk is nothing more than verbal boxing. Yes, boxing – two grown adults with baggy shorts pulled above their navels beating one another senseless with big leather gloves.

Boxers prepare extensively for their fights. They choreograph their initial moves, which are essentially a series of cautiously thrown slower, delicate punches, known as “jabs.”

A boxer’s ensuing actions are then determined by his opponent’s response to these jabs. In other words, a boxer uses his jabs as a means to create an opportunity to land a knockout punch.

Although we hope our conversations are not as confrontational as a boxing

match, there are similarities. For example, we carefully prepare and always have ready a handful of non-threatening, yet basic fact-gathering questions. These are our verbal jabs and should be relatively simple to answer in a word or two.

Depending on the answers to our verbal jabs, we either follow up with other jabs or look for an opening to pose a more in-depth question. When the opportunity comes, our verbal punch is the in-depth question. This requires the other party to elaborate and gives us a chance to determine our next move: another series of jabs or a punch?

With the proper mental preparation, this becomes almost rhythmic for us. After the initial introductions and polite pleasantries, we initiate our course of action:

Jab: What do you do? (Quick Answer)

Jab: How long have you done that? (Quick Answer)

Jab: That hasn’t been that long. What did you do before that? (Quick Answer)

Punch: Interesting change. How did that transition occur? (Elaborate Answer)

As we carefully listen to the answer to our punch, we size up the situation and determine whether another punch is in order or another series of jabs.

Next time we are headed to that business function or Chamber after-hours events, remember you are not there to work the room. You are there to box it. Jab. Jab. Jab. Punch. ▼