

THE ART OF WEAVING YOUR NETWORK

By Sandy Spadaro

One of the best ways to keep the doors of opportunity open is to ensure the flow of prospects, events and leads. You must constantly expand your network of contacts and think of them as an investment with which you can hope to someday collect a return. This process has been recently coined "Net-Weaving" rather than networking.

Help your quest to expand your woven network of prospects by following these standard guidelines:

1) When walking into a crowd, the first step is to assess your opportunity for meeting people strategic to your goals. Doesn't hurt to arrive a little late (but not too late so to be seen as rude) and scan the already full area and seek out the people you want to **target**.

2) Don't be afraid to ask for introductions from people you already know; we're all in this together. Make the most out of the **introductions** you DO receive without neglecting others in the crowd. Associate yourself with people who know a lot of people. But *never* assume that someone you have been introduced to cannot help you; they may actually be best friends with someone who CAN.

3) Always **introduce yourself** in a well spoken manner and create a personal bond by shaking the other person's hand with your right hand. Wear your name tag on the right hand shoulder, as the eye will automatically fall onto that area when your arm is extended.

4) Talk about yourself to emphasize your strong points and to look good, without hogging the conversation. Remember that nobody likes a showoff. Exude **confidence**, not cockiness.

5) It is important to ask questions and **listen**, since people love to talk about themselves. Find out more than their first name, as this information will always be useful for future reference. Remember, we have TWO ears and only ONE mouth; use accordingly.

6) Remember that people form an opinion, a **first impression**, of you within the first 90 seconds of meeting you and it takes an average of 20 more meetings for them to change their initial opinion. The introduction stage is of *critical importance*. You have only a minute and ½ for them to see you in a favorable light.

THE ART OF WEAVING YOUR NETWORK

By Sandy Spadaro

7) Always give your **hands** something to do. Be aware to leave your right hand available for shaking at a moment's notice, but be sure the left one isn't left awkwardly lingering. If you don't have pockets to place it into, hold a drink or a plate/napkin with something on it, even if you aren't eating. This will also allow you to appear to have a purpose in case of any brief moments without a prospect in front of you. Consequently, be sure the food or drink is in the hand you will NOT shake with...don't want it to be cold, wet or clammy when the time comes to extend a friendly gesture.

8) Don't be a business card pusher. Bring them with you, certainly. But use some selective reasoning when giving them out...**qualify** your receiver before shoving a meaningless card in their hand. They're going to throw it away unless two things occur; you've made a great impression and you've convinced them that they need it.

9) Remember that networking is a **two-way process** and that honest and trustworthy people will always return the favor. Always give a lead, make an introduction and deliver some good advice WITHOUT expecting something in return...human nature brings it back around anyway. Master this process and you'll be "Net-Weaving" rather than networking.