

Symbiotic Relationships through Networking

Through networking, you can achieve your personal and professional goals and grow to a level you would not be able to reach on your own; however, people sometimes approach networking the wrong way. If you go into a networking interaction with a selling mindset, whether you are selling yourself or a product or service, you are less likely to achieve success. Networking, rather, is about relationships. Approaching networking as a relationship building endeavor will bring greater results in the end, although it may seem less direct or concrete.

Consider who you seek relationships with. They should be people with influence and either knowledge or power in some form. These are people that will be able to provide you with the information and help you will need. Interact directly with your target market or people who can connect you to your target market. “Up and comers” are also good people to connect with, as they are increasingly getting heard and are likely to be loyal to people who supported them before they were bigger. Some should be in your desired or current industry and they should be people who you look up to do. At least a few connectors should be in another industry doing something that is interesting to you. It is important to gain a fresh perspective, and this will widen and vary your network.

Networking relationships should be mutually beneficial. You shouldn't be entering a networking scenario laser focused on getting offers. Even if this is your end goal, you won't be successful if you set your sights on that and get impatient when it doesn't happen right away. Rather than expecting instant gratification, you should focus on building win-win relationships that will remain profitable in the long run.

Focus on adding value. Relationships require give and take, as does networking. Focus on giving, and you will be more likely to be received down the road. It is important to be aware of and understand what value you have to add. What time, energy, services, resources, and expertise can you bring to the table? What do you have and are willing to give in order to contribute to the relationship and eventually get something in return? Knowing this will help you as you plan your networking and approach your potential connections. Also, try to envision what the other person might like in order to be better prepared to add as much value as possible. For example, an entrepreneur may be looking for fresh ideas and profitability. Understanding their goals and helping them accomplish what they want to achieve will establish a great relationship that will be beneficial long-term.

Solid business relationships are of value to everyone involved. You should be giving as much value, in terms of time, effort, and resources, as you expect to receive in return. If you are, then you will find yourself in a trusting partnership through which both players are reaping the benefits.

