

Five Types of People to Network With

Now that you know these simple networking rules, the next challenge is to improve the way you navigate through the sea of people you could possibly connect with. You can find direction through a contact strategy of identifying different types of potential contacts. And, in my experience, the following types consistently provide potential new business relationships:

1. Satisfied customers

These people will be your best referrals. Customers can become advocates because they already know your work. Ask customers to introduce you to others. Most importantly, remember to follow up with your customers with both personal notes and calls. Remember to thank each person who gives you a referral.

Also note that each person in a session could turn out to be a valuable contact. Although one person in a particular department usually hires you, the people sitting through your session are the ones getting to know your work.

2. Friends

At some point, friends talk frankly about their work life. Make a sincere effort to learn more about your friends' work and be open to helping them. Then, when the time is right, ask them who they might be able to refer to you. Of course, offer them the same help.

3. Neighbours

Make the effort to strike up conversations with people you live near. Often, you'll find out that you have common interests that you never would have discovered otherwise.

4. People with similar interests

There are also many associations to join. While industry-related organisations are great, there might also be a civic group or Chamber of Commerce meeting that can be even more fruitful. While people in the same industry to refer one another from time to time, there may be greater opportunities to pitch your services at a meeting with a broad range of businesses represented.

5. Happy, helpful people

These are new people you connect with in unexpected ways. You might meet people on a plane or train, or waiting in line at the movies. Life has a funny way of connecting us when we least expect it. We just have to be ready for the opportunity.