

How to Waste \$12,000⁺ Networking

By Lynnelle Bianco

There's no question that networking and word or mouth marketing is one of the most effective and economic ways for a small business owner to generate business. But you would be surprised at how costly ineffective networking can be and easy it is to network ineffectively.

Here are 4 mistakes you can make networking that can cost you real money

Forget It's Business

A networking event is not a party and getting there is only part of the battle. If you plant yourself in a chair or attach yourself to someone you already know well and you're talking about the weather and the Sea Dogs because it is comfortable; that's not networking. It's not about the food and it's not about the cocktails so if your idea of a good Chamber After Hours is a free dinner and to knock back a few beers, you are probably not seeing a lot of networking success. You're here to make new contacts and develop other important contacts. It's not about making an appearance and it's not to party. Be focused

Don't Have an Objective

Why are you going to these events? (If it's for a free dinner and drinks, we've already addressed that in #1 above.) Who will be attending this event? What client or potential client would you like to meet or get to know better? Make it a point to think through the result you would like to walk away with. If it's a new prospect you would like to meet, do your homework. Learn about their business before hand. Spend some time thinking of people you know with whom this potential prospect or client may be able to do business with or who they might be interested in knowing. Be Prepared.

Wing-It

First impressions matter. You'll need it to introduce yourself and answer the question "What do you do?" at networking events. If you're a member of BNI (Business Network International) you have to introduce yourself and answer the question "What do you do?" every week. And surprisingly even BNIers, who have to give their "60-sec" (elevator pitch, audio logo, etc.) to the same people every week, don't give a crisp, clear picture of what they do and for whom they do it. Many people you meet at other networking events will be unfamiliar with you and what you do so it's important to practice your "audio logo" so when someone asks "What do you do?", you'll be able to tell them. (And don't forget to smile!)

Go for the Numbers

Focus on getting to know people and their business and for them to get to know you; not on how many contacts you can "check off" the list. Networking isn't a contest about collecting the most cards. Networking is about developing close relationships. It's not what you know that counts; and many times it's not even who you know. It's how well you know them. Focus on the quality of the connections you make rather than the quantity. Be Patient.

So there you have it. Make these 4 networking mistakes and waste not only your time, but a lot of money as well. And the \$12,000; where did that come from?

Let's say, on average, your time is valued at \$50/hour. (Adjust this calculation to reflect your hourly rate more or less as is relevant.)

Using the networking group BNI as an example, you meet once a week for 90 minutes a meeting plus approximately 30 minutes travel time to and from each meeting. This amounts to 104 hours a year @ \$50 per hour. **\$5,200**, not counting the annual membership dues.

You meet one-on-one with your fellow BNI members throughout the year to get to know each other and your work better. You meet individually as well as in Referral Sphere groups and in BNI Member Success and other training venues. Let's assume you meet outside of BNI and/or attend non-meeting BNI functions 36 times a year – 1 hour a time for 36 hours @ \$50 / hour. **\$1,800**

You're a member of the Chamber of Commerce and you attend a few Chamber After Hours events as well as a few Eggs 'N Issues events throughout the year for a total of 26 hours a year @ \$50 / hour. **\$1,300**

You're also civic minded and are a member of the Kiwanis, the Rotary or another civic organization. Assuming weekly meetings of an hour and a half per meeting you're looking at an investment of 78 hours a year @ \$50 / hour. **\$3,900.** (This doesn't take into consideration the various projects and additional time these organizations sponsor.)

That totals:

\$5,200 + \$1,800 + \$1,300 + \$3,900 = \$12,200

Whatever time you invest in whatever networking activities you choose, it is important you treat this investment as you would any other financial investment you make. Because when you get down to it, networking IS a financial investment.

Be Focused, Prepared, Be Succinct, Be Patient. ...and **BE BOLD.**



Lynnelle Bianco, President of [Bold Vision Consulting](http://www.BoldVisionConsulting.com) brings 25+ years of professional and corporate working experience to clients. Having held senior positions in marketing, new business development and client service for global institutions — as well as owning and operating her own small businesses — Lynnelle brings real-world experience and forward looking perspectives to helping today's professionals and business owners achieve breakthrough success. ...and remember; **Be Bold!** It all starts with a vision.