

## **ENTERPRISE**

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### **Sales Solutions**

## **Give back -- a good way to enhance networking**

Andrea Sittig-Rolf

**Question:** I notice when attending networking events or exchanging leads with networking partners, I don't seem to get the qualified leads I'm looking for. What can I do to change my approach and get better leads when networking?

**Answer:** When attending networking events, do you ever notice that there is an overwhelming cloud of "give me" that's in the air? That everyone you meet, while polite in asking what you do for a living, is really just waiting to tell you what they do so you can give them a lead or referral? Ever feel like you're in a room full of salespeople all with something to sell, but with no one to buy? Have you been guilty of this common, yet ineffective form of networking? In this edition of Sales Solutions I encourage you to take the networking challenge and find a few good leads.

The fundamental reason the typical networking process is somewhat unproductive is that everyone involved is looking for what they can get instead of what they can give. Ironically, giving actually encourages giving more than taking does. In other words, it's human nature to want to give back when someone has given to us. This fundamental principle is true in the business world as well. Let me explain what I mean.

Recently I met with someone I exchange leads with on a regular basis. I made a point to focus only on what leads I could give her that would help grow her business, rather than what I might get in return. After listening intently to exactly the type of customer she was looking for, I was able to give her three solid leads. Not only has she closed one of the leads so far, since our meeting she has given me two leads that have both turned into new customers for me.

The point is to listen, and that your purpose of networking should be to genuinely help others. That said, I encourage you to take the networking challenge.

Write down the name of someone with whom you network on a regular basis. Knowing what type of customer they are looking for, look through your database of prospects, customers, and other contacts to determine who in your database might be a good contact for your networking partner. Write down three contacts in your database who you think your networking partner would like to meet. Next to each, write a brief synopsis of why you think they would be a particularly good candidate for your networking partner to meet.

Once you have done this, call your networking partner and share the information you've just written. If it makes sense after your conversation, introduce your networking partner to the three contacts you have identified, either via e-mail, conference call or in person.

That's it, that's all. Just sit back and watch what happens. Chances are, within just a few days, you'll be hearing from your networking partner with a few good leads for you.

Applying this same principle, attend the next networking event with a giving attitude and watch what happens. Ask the people you meet what they do for a living and what type of customer they are looking for. As they're telling you, rather than preparing what you're going to tell them about your business, try to think of people you know that may be exactly who they are looking to meet.

Challenge yourself to give as many leads as you can and measure your success at the end of the event not by how many cards you've collected to try to sell to, but by how many people you were actually able to help during the event. You may be surprised at the positive outcome this process will have not only in the quality of your networking events and relationships, but by the number of additional sales in your own business as well.

*ANDREA SITTIG-ROLF is a former vice president of programs at Sales & Marketing Executives, Seattle chapter, and is president of Sittig Northwest Inc., Redmond. Reach her at 206-769-4886, [www.sittignw.com](http://www.sittignw.com) or [info@sittignw.com](mailto:info@sittignw.com).*

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