

## **Networking Part 2 –**

### **What do I have to offer**

*Staff*

In January we talked about 'Networking How To's'. We provided a simple format to use when you first meet some one to communicate clearly what it is that you are looking for. But as that article indicated, the most powerful way to get people to help you is to help them first. Once you have provided something for them, they will go out of their way to find an opportunity to help you.

So it would seem that a large portion of the whole networking thing is to be able to help others. So the question then comes, 'What do I have that I can offer other people?'

It is easy to believe that our 'useful' network of people is limited to those in our profession or industry and does not stray too far from our core activities. When we are networking however, it is important to keep in mind that a person that we may have no professional use for, might be very useful to someone else.

A very useful exercise and sometimes a refreshing experience is to start to create a list of your contacts. The best way for me to do it is right my name in the centre of a large piece of paper. Then I draw three lines from my name to three circles that have written in them 'Family', 'Friends and Acquaintances' and 'Work'. Now from each spoke I start to draw lines and at the end of each line I put someone's name. For example, on the family spoke I would have lines to my mother, my father and siblings. Next I draw lines from my father out to his father, mother, sisters, brothers, friends of his that I know. I do the same for my Mother. On the 'Work spoke I write all the names of people that I come into contact with at work; colleagues, clients, suppliers, partners, competitors. For each of those people I draw lines out to people I know they know. And so on and so one.

You may be surprised how quickly this diagram gets big. Very Big. You may amaze yourself at the breadth, depth and sheer quantity of the people that you know. Take a look over the list at the variety of occupations, skills and knowledge your network possesses and ask yourself if you really believe that you don't have anything to offer to new people you meet.

Lets assume you go through the above exercise and only have 4 people you know (hardly likely). When networking, contacts are not the only thing you have to offer. You have specific industry knowledge that is not limited to how to help someone put together a resume or answer an interview question. You have insight about how your industry works, the problems it experiences and what different people are doing in your industry. These may seem trivial to you but may be very useful to someone else. That is the key. Very often we believe that because something is so ordinary or trivial to us, that it must be trivial to everyone else. Nothing is farther from the truth.

So keep an open mind and always remember that business is about relationships and people helping people. I believe that a good idea with the right motivation will be a winner more times than not if it is hooked up with the right people. It easily follows that the more people you have in your network, the higher the probability is that you know the right people.

The valuable information or contact that you can provide to someone else may have nothing to do with your industry, however by helping that person out, they in turn will look for an opportunity to help you.