

The Power of Connecting with People

How to Network Online and Make Money Doing It



THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS NETWORKING

In business, great networking is the key to generating exposure and sales. Even if your only practice with networking is trying to get a job, you will have the basics you need to understand the dynamics. All networking consists of generating contacts and then personalizing those contacts in a way that benefits both parties. In a job interview, you are contacting an employer, discussing the needs of the company, exposing your skills and potential ways you can benefit them, and then they pay to hire you, if it's a match. If you have ever gotten a job, you have done some form of networking.

It is obvious, however, that the amount of time it takes to get one job is exhaustive. Add to that the immense competition these days for fewer and fewer jobs, and you know that networking the old-fashioned way is going to put you at a disadvantage. It steals too much time and may or may not generate the results you need. That's why more and more people are hopping on the Internet to learn how to network online. The power of connecting with other people, whether they are in your city or not, is vastly improved on the World Wide Web, rather than relying on face-to-face encounters. Some of the same strategies apply, but here now, you have an opportunity to vastly increase 1) the number of contacts you can make in a set amount of time, and 2) the odds that you have what they need. Tie those two opportunities to a product or service, and you are in business online.

In this short report, you are going to learn how to make those contacts and create those opportunities so that they have the most impact. Let's be clear: Anyone can get on the Internet and start contacting people. How many of them get responses? How many of them have a plan for capitalizing on those interactions? How many of them know what tools and avenues they can take to explode their online exposure? What mistakes are they making that you can avoid by reading this report? That's the type of information that you will find here.

If you have been in the job market in a tight economy, you know that just sending out resumes is not the way to get someone to write you back. You have to know how to locate people interested in who you are and then have what they want in order to get a response. The Internet can facilitate these interactions, but it can also make it easier to ignore your queries, especially if they have a spammy feel to them. No one likes to be marketed in an impersonal and commercial fashion. In fact, most people are so jaded to these attempts that they quickly delete or report them as spam. That's why the very first thing you need to understand when

connecting with people online is that the quality of your interaction necessitates you starting off on the right foot.

WHAT TYPES OF CONNECTIONS ARE YOU GENERATING?

The last thing anyone wants is to be caught at a party with that tedious bore who spends all his/her time talking about himself/herself and never letting you get a word in edgewise. This same offensive behavior repeats itself over and over in online marketing in some attempt to convince others that they should buy some product, when marketers still haven't even determined what their audience wants most from them. If they just took the time to find out why people are connecting, they'd have a much easier time converting the contact into a personal connection that generates a loyal follower and not just a one-time buyer.

TWO WAYS TO MAKE A CONNECTION

A connection can either be forced or it can be attracted. One way is not better than another online and you may find yourself implementing both strategies at one time or another. A forced connection is one where you are active in going to places to network, such as online forums and groups, and actively engaging participants there in order to meet more people.

The other way of attracting connections is through strategies like Search Engine Optimization and through good content. You put out something of great value, and of course, those people who find it through links you place strategically around the Web will be attracted to your offers.

In one scenario, you are going to the people; in another, they are coming back to you. In a forced connection, you will know why people are congregating to a certain spot and what they want to talk about the most. There are specific demographics to websites that you can easily find out, either through observation or through analysis with tools like www.quantcast.com.

On the other hand, when you attract people from various social networking sites, it may come as a surprise, but they may be attracted for reasons you may have never even considered. That's the hidden gold and

your future path to riches. Once you find out why people are *naturally* attracted to you and your site, that's your niche. At first, yes, you start with a forced niche – preferably one that is largely profitable – but then you have to make it uniquely yours. How will you do that? By understanding how you generated the natural connections that flocked to your site without much effort on your part. They saw something important in you, even if you don't see it yourself. After that, it's a question of listening to what they want to talk about most and learning how to put out products and services that will help them the most.

PRACTICE THE ART OF LISTENING

The first words from an online connection should never be about sales. The potential for a long-term connection is immediately destroyed if you try to market to a person before you've even learned what he/she wants. It destroys trust and it turns people off immediately. This approach works for television commercials where your audience is a passive blob on a couch; it is a death sentence online where people are participating actively, especially on social networking sites. Take the time to listen to what people are discussing and get to know the contact before trying to actively market to him/her.

Having said that, it's important to listen with the understanding that you are seeking out ways that you can help create value in another person's life via your sales offerings. The conversation should be natural, and yet, it should also be targeted towards producing some benefit to both parties. For you, it can be a sale; for them, it is having some problem solved or having their lives made easier. No one is going to complain if you've managed to achieve that outcome and you sold something too while you were at it – it would be a win-win situation for both the customer and for you.

SOLICIT FEEDBACK

When you first meet up with someone online, you may be tempted to market to him or her immediately. Instead, solicit feedback as to what attracted the visitor to your site. This is valuable information that can help you tailor your content and your offerings to the biggest needs of your audience.

There are numerous ways you can solicit feedback. You can put up a poll and ask people to take part. You can offer a drawing with a prize for participating in the poll. You can send out an email asking people for their

opinions. You can even just invite them to a forum where other people are discussing things of importance to them. The key is to make an initial contact that is non-threatening and that also helps to set the stage for how you intend to interact with your audience in the future.

PAY ATTENTION TO PATTERNS

As you start to generate an open dialogue with your visitors, you will spot some common concerns that they all have and that attracted them to your site. You may be selling diapers on your site, but what the mothers who visited really would love are diaper bags that don't leak, look fashionable, and are eco-friendly. Without discussing with these visitors, you can miss out on a great opportunity to add a product that already has a ready audience waiting to buy. That's why listening is so important to your online connections.

PLAN YOUR INCOME STREAMS

If you were a consultant trying to make a presentation to get hired to do a job for a company, you would pay close attention to what you are saying, what your customer wants, and how you intend to profit from the interaction. Yet, very few Internet marketers pay attention to exactly how they are going to create income from all of their interactions. The opportunity to meet many new people online is so large that they get caught up in the excitement of networking and building a follower base and they completely forget that they must convert those connections to paying customers to profit. Where did they go wrong? They failed to plan their future income streams.

HOW TO PROFIT FROM YOUR CONNECTIONS

There are a few tried and true ways to profit online. All you need to figure out is how to get your contacts to enter a sales funnel that gives you multiple opportunities to profit from their connection with you. First, let's go over the traditional ways to make money online.

- **Selling Products & Services**
You can create your own products or have an inventory of retail products that you buy wholesale. Infoproducts are an excellent choice for online businesses, but anything that can be shipped is a possibility for selling online.
- **Collecting Affiliate Commissions**
You can promote and sell other people's products and receive an

affiliate commission on them. There are numerous affiliate banks that allow you to pick offers relevant to your content and to market them on your site by publishing a small link or code snippet within your HTML pages.

- **Recruiting Others into Referral Programs**

Multi-tiered referral programs offer some great ways to make money on recruiting and downline income. If you recruit a real moneymaker, you can end up with a commission on his/her sales too, depending on how the program is run.

- **Advertising Dollars**

Advertisers are interested in online personalities relevant to their demographic niches and who will promote their products. Offering some advertising space in exchange for money is one way to profit from the connections that you have generated as a focused audience for their ads.

These are a few of the ways people make money online. Keep your eyes open for new opportunities, however, as the Internet has a way of exploding technologies and ways of doing business overnight.

CREATE YOUR SALES PROMOTIONS

Once you know how you are going to profit from your connections, you have to start to develop some planned sales promotions. You will want to create several lists, separating your contacts into demographics or income brackets so that you know which promotion they will respond to best. You don't want to market low-income people with large, costly items, but you don't want to offer cheap items to well-heeled prospects either. It's really up to you to decide how you will separate your lists, but generally, you should have at least three sets of categories and three sales promotions going at any one given time.

THE SALES FUNNEL

Once you have a listing of products and services that you know are of interest to your viewers, you need to set up a sales funnel to market to people coming to your site. Initially, as discussed, you are going to connect and listen to any newcomer's input to determine which group he/she belongs in. If he/she doesn't self-identify, add him/her to a basic group that starts with low-cost/high-value products or services.

Each step of the way, you are going to try to determine (based on his/her actions) if you are marketing to him/her correctly and if you are being successful. The way to do this is to keep track of what he/she is buying and then have a ready rung of promotions to roll out when he/she picks anything. Each promotion then might have three levels, and each level might offer five to ten products initially. You just rotate through the products on a level until he/she bites, then you can promote him/her to another level or continue to offer him/her more products on the same level.

TIME YOUR SALES PROMOTIONS

Planning a year ahead of time isn't really that far-fetched. Once Christmas is over for this year, you'll want to think about Christmas for next year. How do you plan on making money with the different concerns that arise from different issues each month? If you understand society, you understand that there are some major trends that happen every so often, like tax season, holidays, and special occasions. Don't just market as if none of that is happening in the background. Instead, seek to time your sales promotions to make use of what might be foremost in everyone's mind when it rolls out. That way, you have a better chance of making a sale, and people will appreciate the fact that you are interested in what is concerning them.

GENERATING BIG EXPOSURE

Each sales promotion should have a planned sales campaign designed to generate the most exposure and income from it. Exposure, in terms of the Internet, is nothing more than the number of eyeballs you get to come and see your offer. It's not as fancy as the word sounds. Luckily, you don't have to send anyone out on a street corner with a sandwich board to generate big interest for your promotions online. You can do it via a carefully crafted web of social interactions and site seeding.

MINING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Just like you would first start your offline business by networking with your closest social network of friends and family, you are going to do the same online. The platforms that you are going to use are sites like Facebook.com, Twitter.com, LinkedIn.com, StumbleUpon.com, and Digg.com. All of these social networks have the potential to create massive exposure for your offerings, but before you have that

opportunity, you have to build the network online to prepare for the day when you roll out your big sales promotion.

Start by building a profile that talks about who you are and your business interests. Find other people to link to you based on similar interests, as these will be the people most likely to be interested in what you are selling. Don't market to them actively until you have a sales promotion in mind. Otherwise, be satisfied with building up your contacts of friends and followers to prepare for the day when you are going to use these sites to gain exposure for your sales.

Once you do have sufficient contacts, you can use the status updates on these sites to update, quickly and efficiently, people on your latest sales promotions. All the hard work it took to get the profile up and to build the network will ultimately reap mega dividends in terms of powerful marketing in a flash. Always keep it authentic; avoid spamming people or doing anything that can get you kicked off the site, and you will be able to continue to use these platforms as a way to gain exposure, even if you can't solicit people directly.

USE OTHER STRATEGIES TO GAIN EXPOSURE TOO

Don't stop just with social networking. Go to forums, groups, and blogs to find active audiences that might be interested in your sales promotions. Don't solicit directly; however, you can contribute to ongoing conversations and add a link to your site when it's relevant to do so. When Internet marketers talk about traffic being the way to riches, they are talking about the millions of connections you make at various sites that are willing to come back and take a peek at your site. Putting out a link to your offerings, however, doesn't guarantee that you've gotten someone to connect with you. It's how you treat that person when he/she interacts with you that will determine whether the person stays and buys or whether he/she walks away.

Keep in mind that not everyone processes information in the same way. Some people prefer to hear their information, while others want to see something to understand it. Still, others prefer a touchy/feely approach in order to "get a handle on it." When utilizing face-to-face marketing, you can tell what your customer prefers by the way he/she interacts with you and the language he/she uses. Online, you might get some of that through language when you discuss things back and forth on a forum, but you won't really see that from an anonymous visitor to your site. That's why it's important to offer your visitors something tangible that speaks to them in their language. This is done by offering audio, visual, and kinesthetic information on the site that can appeal to each of the three groups.

Videos, for instance, appeal to people who process information visually. There are as many YouTube addicts as there are people who just love to

download music. Still, some people need to feel a book in their hands to feel comfortable. As you seek to make connections, be aware of the environment and the audience. It will attract people who prefer one style of communication to another. Your job is to match that and to offer some of that style on your sales pages so that when they come back, they'll have an instant rapport with you. Not only does it strengthen the connection, but it also creates a wider exposure for you to have your content in various formats, from video to audio and even to physical format books.

As you start to gain an Internet presence on all of these high-traffic sites and stream some of those connections back to your own site, you will find that it gets harder and harder to manage all of those connections. You might find it takes more and more of your time to comment and to promote your links. You don't want to spend so much time socializing on the Internet that you don't have enough time to plan new product rollouts and to close big deals. The answer to that is to learn how to automate your connections while maintaining a personal touch when necessary.

In the next section, we'll discuss some of the tools to use to not only create greater exposure and many more new connections, but also to simplify and make your interactions more efficient. The idea is to exploit your interactions so that what you relay in one interaction serves not just one customer, but many customers. As more people find value in your interactions, whether you personally talked to them or not, they will return more and more to your site. If you encourage them to bring their friends with them, via generating referral or affiliate programs that create income opportunities for them too, you not only widen your connections, but you empower them to build your business for you as well.

TOOLS TO MANAGE YOUR CONNECTIONS

In your personal life, you know that if you miss someone's birthday, he's/she's likely to feel slighted. Yet, people fail to try to make their online connections feel special and important just because they are virtual friends. Sometimes, it can be a simple matter of feeling overwhelmed. It's okay to manage talking to 20 or 30 people online, but what happens when your connections reach into the hundreds and thousands? The power of the Internet makes it so easy to connect that these numbers that would be impossible in a face-to-face situation are a real possibility for many Internet marketers. If you want to continue generating the same success with your connections when you had just a few, it's going to take some fancy footwork and great tools to keep your audience feeling special and important when there are so many others vying for your attention.

PLAN YOUR INTERACTIONS

At this point, not only are people expecting to hear from you, but you can lose a large share of your audience if you suddenly go silent. This makes it very hard on you when you want to take time to develop some other area of your business and your audience of friends or followers is clamoring for attention. That's why you need to be sure to feed them regularly by planning your interactions.

Let's give an example. Let's say that you joined Twitter and cultivated thousands of followers. Obviously, you can't pay attention to them all one-on-one and you can't be online 24 hours a day in person. You can, however, manage these interactions and even schedule them so that they don't interfere with other activities that you are completing to generate income. Take a look at the many third-party applications, like **TweetLater.com** and **TweetDeck.com**, that will allow you to view the stream, respond to questions, and even schedule your interactions for days when you simply want to be offline, but will continue your presence online virtually. The applications are free to use and will make your life a whole lot easier.

Not only will your audience be thrilled, but you will also be able to plan your tweets to roll out a promotion every step of the way, without having to be at your computer terminal to do it. It's a real-time way of being present, even when you could be snoozing on a beach getting a tan at the time your product promotion happens online.

CATEGORIZE TO TARGET-SPECIFIC GROUPS

Categorize your list of friends and followers, especially if you have their email addresses and are marketing to them via email. This will help you to roll out several promotions at once and to get better results from your offerings. Of course, it is easier just to have one list of people and then use that to mass market, but that's not a very efficient way to market to people or to make them feel special. It's like the ubiquitous newsletter that shows up in your email inbox that you know got broadcast to an entire list. How special is that? Not much, and people understand when they are being listened to and when their needs are being addressed. Learning to categorize and to really understand the connection you've generated is the key to picking products and services that provide value to that person. If there is a match, the sale is practically automatic.

You can set up various email lists yourself through the control panel on each website that you own. This quickly becomes unwieldy and can cause cross-emailing when one customer is visiting two or more of your sites. In that case, you want a central list for all of your websites. You want to categorize that central list, create promotions for them, and time the frequency of contact accordingly. Use a service like **AWeber.com** to free up your time to create the promotions and to understand the customer's

needs. Let someone else do the nitty-gritty work of actually sending, replying, and managing multiple contact lists.

MANAGE FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION

Once you have a list that is categorized and sales promotions that are planned out, you need to determine what is a suitable frequency of interaction for each list. You also have to be flexible to change that frequency if more interest is generated. Let's say that you have one list of subscribers to your website content, but who never buy anything. Do you want to waste your time paying close attention to this group as the big spenders? You do want them to have the same quality of attention, but maybe it's not so important to give them your personal attention. In that case, you will want to offer interactions that they can manage themselves and can determine the frequency themselves. Offer them FAQs, group interactions, and forum discussions. At some point, they will convert to customers, but they may be slow to sprout and generate income.

Those people who are actively buying are important to remain in contact with and to determine their needs better. You might have a higher level of interaction, more frequent interaction, and more personal interaction, depending on how they react. You don't want to spam them, but you want to be sure that they know you are listening to them and are interested in determining the solutions that will help make their lives richer and easier.

CREATE A WEB OF GROUPS

As you gather more and more people in disparate social networks, blogs, discussion forums, and groups, you don't want to have to update everyone manually. You may not even want to send out emails to these people, as that would violate the terms of service that don't allow active solicitation. In this case, you have to get smart about how you are going to update all of these people when something new comes out. You have to link as many sites together so that when you update one site, all of the other sites will be updated with links too.

There are third-party applications and services that will let you do that so that you can get the most exposure out of each piece of copy or update that you write. On Facebook.com, for instance, you can use **FriendFeed** to link your Twitter and Facebook status updates. It will also let you add updates to things you find on StumbleUpon.com and bookmark on Delicious.com. Imagine that you write up a sales page, add a link with a catchy header on Twitter, and FriendFeed automatically posts it to your Facebook audience. That's the way to make the best use of your time.

Wouldn't it be great if you could do that with press releases and articles? You can! Get a third-party service that will post your content to multiple free article sites and that will link back to your own site. It will cost you a

bit, but the exposure you get will be much more than if you spent a few days manually adding in these links yourself. It frees up your time and vastly increases your audience.

NETWORK WITH CORE GROUP

To prime the pump for a sales promotion or to expose your content more, try to find people you can rely on to comment, add as a favorite, or rate your links and content. Do the same for them. Network with these people to promote each other's offerings and content. This will substantially increase your reputation and your credibility on the Internet if others are recommending your products and services. On Facebook, you can use a third-party application called **NetworkedBlogs** to list your blog, for instance. Find similar blogs that might have a readership that would be interested in what you write and follow them. Often, these bloggers will return the favor by following your blog and rating it too.

This is a form of free PR. It gives new readers the impression that your blog is hot, and nothing attracts success like more success. Once you get a core group of people joining, commenting on, and rating your content, as well as promoting you and your business, they will help you to build your business through the power of connections. Be sure to repay the favor by offering them something of value to maintain their interest, like a referral program or a sign-up bonus for each new person they attract to your site.