



Seven Networking Flashpoints

Tips to obtain maximum results at your next networking event

Compliments of Teakwood Marketing—Cincinnati, OH

If you have any level of sales responsibility, you will eventually end up “networking” at a business event. These 7 tips are designed for the person who wants to maximize their opportunity for new business at the next networking event.

Flashpoint #1 – Start With a Goal

This doesn't have to be complicated. Typically, I have a goal to meet two new people, understand the basics of their business and find out what their prospect looks like. I am not on the hunt to collect 20 business cards. People refer to people they know, like and trust. Start with building a relationship. Get to know them.

Teakwood Marketing has made me profits, saved me time, and most importantly, kept me accountable for implementing my marketing plan.

Jerry Robbins
Owner
Sunrise Window

Flashpoint #2 – Show Up Early

Arriving just in time for a lunch event and leaving right after accomplishes one thing. You fed yourself. The only thing that is going to grow with that strategy is your waistline. Guess who shows up early for chamber events...usually the leaders of the association. When it comes to finding business opportunity, start with getting to know the leaders of the group.

Flashpoint #3 – Avoid Your Buddy

If you are really on the hunt for new business, then talking to your buddy about last weekend's big game is a waste of time. I believe that networking events cause a bit of anxiety in everyone. That's OK. If you have a goal, you will get through it. The problem is that your buddy doesn't have a goal. He will stick with you like glue because he is too anxious to meet anyone new.

Flashpoint #4 – Position Yourself to Win

Some events have a formal and organized networking time. Others are much more informal. Since you are going to be at this event early, why not ask one of the leaders that are setting up how the networking works? Now that you know, prepare yourself to win...Practice what to say...Make sure you have enough business cards. I was recently invited to visit a chamber lunch. When I asked my colleague about the networking time, she said “It all happens when we are in line for the food!” Good thing I didn't ask about it after I filled my plate.

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Flashpoint #5 – Ask These Questions

Let's face it. You like to hear yourself talk. Me too. If you want to connect with people quickly, you have to hold back your desire to spill your guts about your product and let them talk. Ask these questions and LISTEN:

- What attracted you to the XYZ business?
- Are there any interesting trends happening in the ABC industry?
- How would I know if I was talking to someone that might be a good prospect for you?

When was the last time anybody asked you questions like that? Wouldn't you like to be asked these questions?

Flashpoint #6 – Know Your 30 Second Commercial

When you get the chance to tell someone about what you do, offer or deliver, be sure to be well rehearsed. You don't want to fumble over this part. It should be smooth and conversational. When somebody asks, in a networking situation, what I do, I simply say that "Every business needs strategic marketing help, but they just don't need it five days a week. I am the part-time marketing director for a handful of companies." The typical reaction I see is plenty of head nodding and a verbal "That makes sense" response. When this happens, I know that they know the value that I deliver.

Your assessment of my website is insightful, accurate and incredibly honest. Are all your clients this fortunate?

Michael Flannery
Host

Nine On Your Kids Side

Flashpoint #7 – Stay Late

Sounds familiar, doesn't it. It is the same principle as in Flashpoint #2 - Show Up Early. You would be amazed at how many nuggets I've uncovered hanging around after an event or on the stroll to the parking lot with a prospect. Don't be in a hurry to leave. Opportunity knows no time limit!

Bonus Tip

Never collect a business card and load it into your email newsletter list without the prospect's permission. When you collect a business card, tell the prospect the value of your newsletter and ask them if they would be interested in reading it. Nothing screams "amateur sales person" better than an email newsletter (that I didn't ask for and I'm not going to read) jamming up my mail box every two weeks. Get permission first.

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