

Turbo-Charge Your Business With Stronger Relationships

People are important to all businesses. Businesses need employees. Businesses need clients. Businesses need suppliers.

As businesses switch to automated vendor selection systems, automated response mechanisms and endless streams of e-mail, relationships are becoming more important than ever.

So, as the world becomes more automated, social networks are becoming more prevalent. The internet has spawned many tools for social networking, like YouTube, FaceBook and instant messaging. There are also forums, news groups and chat groups to bring like-minded people together.

How do networks help business people grow and flourish?

Strength – Rather than going to market with a new product or service, a network can be used as a source to get feedback. The network could also generate ideas that you had never thought of. Why re-invent the wheel? Use the power of groups to move forward quicker.

Expansion – The old adage states there are only six degrees of separation between any two people. If you're looking to expand your product line or to break into new markets, the bigger your network is, the quicker you can reach the people needing your new products, or in the new markets. With communication and transportation costs at all-time low costs, it's now more a case of **who** to contact, rather than **how** to contact them. The network can definitely help with the who.

Employment Changes – You can be the best in your field, but what good is that if nobody knows about it? Maybe you've outgrown your current position, or maybe your company has lost a contract due to changes in government. If you do find yourself looking for a change, a network can speed up the word on the street. Similarly, you can also use your network to find good employees when the need arises.

Financial Gains – Businesses are growing and expanding through

various ways Many businesses are looking to add customers through fancy financial measures, such as bartering. That is, they may sell natural resources to cash-strapped companies that have an abundance of inventory. So, they will trade their natural resources for the company's inventory, on the condition that a third party will purchase the second company's inventory. This can be much easier to do if you have a large network which includes both suppliers and purchasers of various products. The more options you have to sell products or services, the better your financial gains will be.

To make your network more effective, you should first take stock of where it currently stands. Who is in your network? How many people would answer the phone if they know it's you? How many people would help you if they knew you had a problem that needs solving? How many people would you respond to and help?

Once you've taken stock of the size and strength of your network, examine your business goals. Who, or what type of people, do you need in your network to score your business goals quicker and easier?

Take out a piece of paper, or open a document on your computer, and write down the categories for clients, employees, suppliers, media, etc. to outline who you need in your network to score your goals. Write in the names of the people who are currently both in your network and fit those categories, and then record the strength of your relationship with them.

To increase the size of your network, meet more people. Determine who it is that you can build relationships with, and then look for opportunities to meet with them. There are many networking groups in every town. Research those in your town, and determine which ones will help you out. If there don't seem to be any groups in your area, start a new one! Declare a format, meeting place and time, and then invite people to join your group. There are also millions, literally, of Yahoo groups, chat groups, newsgroups and forums to discuss any topic you could possibly be interested in. If you can't find an online group, then start one!

To increase the strength of your network, add more value to the relationship. Everyone has a relative who only calls when they need something. The person will be a total stranger until they phone you at 11 pm on a weekend asking for money or help or whatever. I'm sure you know the type. Wouldn't you be more likely to help, and at an earlier stage, if you were in constant communication with this relative? Even more so, if the person had shown an interest in you, and helped you out in some way? To strengthen your business network, look at who you want a stronger relationship with. Then, determine a method of adding value to the relationship. Perhaps, you could send a newspaper or magazine article of interest to the person, with some personal notes on the side. Or you could bring them to a networking event that you think would help them. Maybe a phone call, or getting together for lunch would strengthen the relationship.

In computer networks, there is a term called ping. One node will try to ping the other node to see if the path is still alive. If the path is valid, the pinged node will respond with an "I am Here" message. So both nodes know that the network is still alive.

Go ping your network today, and see how alive it really is.

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