



The Importance of Networking



Networking is creating, maintaining and sustaining personal and professional relationships that you can utilise for guidance and assistance with your business or enterprise.

Your network is made up of all the people you connect with during your entrepreneurial journey, all of whom could potentially offer you valuable business assistance or guidance. To create and maintain a beneficial network, you must intentionally seek out opportunities to connect with others in order to grow and expand your network.

Networks can consist of a variety of people, including: coworkers; family; friends; teachers or fellow students; professionals in your field; clients or customers; personal acquaintances; local community or business organisations; mentors/coaches.

There are potential contacts everywhere, and making the most of connections like these can be significantly beneficial for your business/enterprise. Intentionally broadening and maintaining your network is one of the most important steps you can take to increase your chances of professional success.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Find the right event

There are many organisations that offer networking events. You'll want to find the right kind of event for you and your business. Try checking out business meetup groups, industry associations, conferences and trade shows and co-working spaces etc. Ideally, your business goals will align with the place you network. For example, if you're looking to upskill your business awareness, a course or training programme might be a good way to meet people.

Get Prepared

Think about what you'd like to focus on and get out of the networking event. This will help keep you focused when you get in the room. Before you attend a networking event, it might help to think about the following:

- How will you introduce yourself and your business?
- What are three key points you'd like someone to know about your business?

You can use our Value Proposition and 60-Second Pitch Resources to help you prepare for networking conversations!

- Are there areas of your business you'd like help with?
- How can you make it easy for new contacts to follow up with you after the event e.g. business cards, product samples?

Be confident, show up

Perhaps the most important part of networking is also the most difficult – showing up. Other business priorities or fears of not knowing anyone can keep you from going. But once you arrive and get into your first few conversations, you will start to feel confident and will get better and better at pitching your business/enterprise vision.

Introduce yourself

Each new person you meet offers you a chance to get better at talking about your business. When people ask what you do, pay attention to how they receive your answer. If they ask questions to clarify certain points, think about how you might change your answer in the future.

Listen

When you're not talking, be a good listener. Listen to really hear what the other person is saying rather than listening to respond. Be sure to catch their name when they introduce themselves and ask for clarification if you didn't get it the first time. Checking you got someone's name right shows you're willing to make the effort to get to know them.

Ask questions

Be curious in your conversations and ask questions. Yes/No questions are ok, but open-ended questions will give the other person a chance to elaborate. You can also ask questions that relate to the issues you're currently working through. This means you'll find out more about them and maybe learn about an opportunity.

Follow up

This first meeting should be the first conversation of many to come. Don't be afraid to ask someone for their business card or offer to shout them coffee. You never know where the next conversation might lead.



People and places that I could add to my existing networks.