

Stop Selling!

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I went to a networking event recently and met a lady who worked for a professional services firm. After a few moments of chit chat, she began to ask me very targeted and personal questions about my business. I answered her as vaguely as possible without being rude but it did no good. I finally had to break off the conversation and move on.

This person obviously had taken sales training that told her to attend as many networking events as possible to hunt for leads. While I agree with that strategy in general, it is important to understand that there is a fine line between “networking” and “sales”. Business and social events can be a great place to meet prospects, but they are horrible places to try to “sell”.

It is important to understand that “networking is networking” and “selling is selling”. That may seem over-simplistic to some, but it is clearly not fully understood by many professionals. Use networking events to meet people, establish rapport and build trust. Not every person you meet will be a prospect, but many of them will ultimately be able to connect you to your future customers if they feel they can trust you in the process.

Once you have developed a bit of a relationship with someone you meet at a networking event, call them and ask for a meeting to discuss possible business opportunities. If they are open to the discussion, you have done a great job building relationship.

Your goal in the initial meeting is to make sure you learn as much about what they have to offer as possible. Once you have heard them out, they will most likely be willing to give you their undivided attention while you explain your business objectives and the services you offer.

A great sales person knows when to sell and when to simply build relationship. Getting the two mixed up is never a recipe for success.

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