

## **The Link System® for Business Networking**

### **The Link System®**

**The Link System®** is the marketing technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Today's business environment demands that all business people develop mutually beneficial business relationships. Relationships which establish a long and continuous flow of new business.

**The Link System® for Business Networking** can be taught to anyone willing to put in the time, effort, and resources.

### **Definitions**

#### **A Link:**

A professional who bonds with another professional to exchange productive information consistently and immediately.

#### **Business-Bit:**

A few words written on the back of a business card to remind you what you spoke about or where you met.

#### **Networking:**

The exchange of ideas, information & resources.

#### **The Link System® Curriculum:**

A methodology for developing wealth by building relationships without the debilitating demands of prospecting or cold calling

### **What is Networking?**

Everyone has a problem with networking...No one can define it...What you can't define, you can't control...You can't enter your financial orbit with your connections or links unless you have a networking process...I found the definition of networking in the book **Megatrends**...Naisbett discusses 10 megatrends...Mighty trends that will transform business as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Chapter 8 is all about *networking*. His definition of networking is the exchange of **I**deas...**I**nformation...and **R**esources.

### **Information is Power**

**Information is power**...Economic power...A paradigm shift is in order...Shift your paradigm 180°...Realize that information is more important than...**A** Client...**A** Customer...**P**rospect...Valuable information is *multiple* clients...customer...and prospects...a client is *singular*...Productive information is *multiple* business happenings...Your assignment is to search for information that will become a myriad of clients...customers and prospects for you and your executive links...Drucker said..."**Money is Information in Action**".

### **Network and Selling Don't Mix**

Networking and Selling are like oil and water...Both are vital for your financial engine...but keep them in separate containers...some professionals equate networking to selling. *Not so!* I have often heard people say as they leave a luncheon, "Boy! Am I a good networker...I just got three prospects!" That's Selling. Selling inhibits a relationship...Networking bonds a relationship...Unless you have taken a vow of poverty, stop selling at events...If you keep asking for the order...the next event you attend...people you want to meet will avoid you like you had a virulent virus. Start gathering information...Stop gathering cards...

### **Never Be Late ~ Be Early ~ Stay Late**

I am not talking about protocol...I am talking about **Making More Money**...I am talking about Bottom Line Profits...You have been shouted at all your life..."Don't be late!"...By your mother...By your father...By your teacher...By your employer...but no one has ever explained the financial advantages of being early...Vince Lombardi...the late Coach of the Green Bay Packers said..."If you are 10 minutes early...you are late"...I say..."Unless you are 30 minutes early to events...you're late". I ask the questions in the seminar..."Why be early?" The answers are legion. "I get the best parking spot"... "I get the best seat"... "I get the biggest bagel"...These reasons do not add one more comma to your paycheck...These are your **Monetary Mistakes**...

Being late for an event is an unconscious act...it is called **unconscious incompetence**...Everyone has their tardy tales...Everyone has an excuse for being late...Some want to enlarge their ego...an enlarged ego shrivels the pocketbook...Excuses are legion...some mention...Traffic...Last minute phone call...Disorganized...Poor planning...Reluctant to participate...These reasons are all superficial.

### **Prepare and Research Networking Events**

There are 5 requirements to complete before an event...

1. Know the information you need to gather, i.e. what business silos are relevant to you
2. Know who will be attending
3. Know who is critical to your business
4. Research the professionals and the firms
5. Prepare a one sentence answer to a question you may be asked about your firm or business

### **Distinctions between Pre-networking & Networking**

Stop *networking* at events...*Networking* is the exchange of **Ideas**...**Information**...and **Resources**...You do not have the luxury of time at an event to share information...*Pre-network*...*Pre-networking* is gathering information...Stop *networking* and begin gathering information...You have a *30-minute* window of opportunity when you attend an event...When you gather information you uncover **Links**...When you uncover **Links** you uncover money...Remember, **Linking** creates multiple business

opportunities...Selling inhibits a multitude of business opportunities...Stop gathering deals, gather Links.

The goal is to identify as many people in the room, within the time frame involved and your comfort level (which will change over time), that have the connections and resources that would enhance your business, and whose business you could enhance with your connections and resources.

### **Basic Components of a Pre-Networking Conversation-The Bridge**

The *bridge* is a connection between the handshake and the **Link** questions...*The bridge* must be well constructed...*The bridge* must contain *one* innocuous question that melts the ice...*The bridge* question must be disarming...This makes a smooth transition from the handshake to the **Link** questions...I have *four* bridge suggestions...

1. "How did you hear about the event?"
2. "Did you have difficulty finding a parking spot?"
3. "Have you attended these meetings before?"
4. "What do you know about the speaker?"

After one innocuous question...begin asking the 4 Link Questions...**The bridge connects strangers.**

#### Link Questions:

1. "What does your firm do?"

This question will not only help you determine if that professional is a Link...but will eliminate those who are not...Many times the answer to this question will give you a Link clue...Example...if the answer to this question is..."My firm builds air conditioners for office buildings"...You know that they interface with a multitude of disciplines...Architects...Construction companies...Developers...Janitorial Services...Tenants of office buildings...If your target market interfaces with these industries...You have a similar client base.

2. "What is your position with you firm?"

This question continues the process of discovering the ultimate business contact...a **Link**...If the professional says..."I'm the CEO of Smith & Sons"...You know you are communicating with the supreme decision maker...If the answer to **Link Question #2** is..."I just started with my firm last week"...That person may have little clout...A further chat could be a waste of time and money...**However**...if the person recently moved from a firm...the professional may have been a decision maker with their previous firm...That person may have **Link potential**.

3. "What is your target market?"

If *your* target market is similar to *their* target market...and you are not in *competition*...You may have a **Link...Example**...XEROX and AT&T...Both call on similar businesses but sell a different product...Firms which need a copier often need a new phone system...a great match...A great **Link potential**.

4. "How long have you been with the firm?"

5. "What did you do before?"

6. "Thin slicing" from a positive meeting

Say...*"May I have your card? I'd like to call you at five tomorrow. Let's get together and see if we can help each other develop some business; I sense some synergies. It was a pleasure to meet you."*

Don't say...*"I want to come over to your office and tell you about a new product line we are introducing"...*That is *Financial Foolishness*...You are selling...Begin by giving...Make a 180° paradigm shift in your communication exchange....Say...*"We are not in the transaction business...We are in the relationship business"*.

7. "Thin slicing" from a negative meeting

This is the conclusion you use when you don't want to see the person again...Some conversations need a conclusion sooner than others...If the conversation is going nowhere...and keeps going around and around like a merry-go-round...and ends where you began...**terminate it quickly!**...four suggestions to terminate a conversation:

- "I've enjoyed meeting you...I know you have other people you would like to meet and I've others I would like to meet...I'm looking forward to seeing you again"
- "Where are the hors d' oeuvres?"
- Introduce that person you are terminating to another and make a graceful exit
- "Where is the restroom?"

8. Additional thoughts, techniques and attitudes

If you take more than *five* minutes with anyone when pre-networking...You are committing *Financial Fraud*...You are stealing from yourself...There are many reasons professionals spend too many minutes with each person...None has validity...They are not reasons...They are excuses...Business men and women who spend 20 minutes with *one* professional do so because of any one of the *three* following excuses:

- Allow others to monopolize the conversation
- Some want to begin a rapport
- Some have no agenda

Unless you move from stranger to stranger every *five* minutes during the *Social Hour*...you will miss at least one stranger who has a bulging database full of your prospects waiting just for you.

Spend no more than *five* minute with each stranger you meet...Then *waltz* on to the next professional...Be careful...do not become a tornado...Be as smooth as a politician at a fund raiser...With practice you become *subtle...smooth...succinct...and successful*...At the end of *300* seconds...no matter what...move on...Use this system and you will know if that professional is **Link possibility**...a prospect...a new friend...or a resource person...After *five* minutes...*waltz on*.

It is important to remember...when you are *networking* everyone has to be perceived as a peer...Unless you check your ego at the door or your future goes out the window...Rip off your corporate badge of ego and treat everyone as an equal...**A** business baron or a busboy...**A** CEO or a secretary...**A** judge or a janitor...It makes no difference...Information is the *key*...Information levels the playing field...**A** secretary with her finger on the hold button knows more than the CEO will ever disclose...You cannot see eye to eye...when you are looking down your nose at another.

#### 9. Questions to avoid

Avoid questions where you lose control.

- "How's your golf game?"
- "Where are you going on your vacation?"
- "How is the family?"
- "What do you think of the Lakers?"

If you control the questions...you control the answers.

#### 10. Making it Happen

Challenge your fears...Confront your comfort zone..."Your life begins at the end of your comfort zone." *Neal Donald Walsh*

**THIS IS NOT RAPPORT TIME, IT'S SCREENING TIME.**

Stick to the process. Budget your time (5 minutes per person). Be genuinely interested. Your goal is to build relationships that will benefit all parties. Be your word. Do it all with an authentic and friendly persona.

That's it! That's the bandwidth of networking. There is more emotional and intellectual depth of course, but the same principles are always in play.

Be genuinely interested and reciprocal. Ask imaginative questions and **Listen, Listen, Listen!** Make a positive human connection. Stick to the process. Watch your time investment.

### **Following Through After Asking For the Card**

1. Follow through with scheduling your get together

- a. BE YOUR WORD
- b. Agree on the division of time for the meeting
- c. Pick a venue with limited distractions
- d. Share your goal

2. Networking Goal

To establish relationships with like-minded business professionals, that will mature over time through the mutual exchange of ideas, information, and resources.

Ideas, information and resources that will strengthen both parties position in the market place

3. Research before meeting

Research the company and the individual on the internet. This research will precipitate questions that will uncover possible ways that you can help each other.

- a. Record these questions and possibilities for discussion
- b. Divide into two categories
  - i. How you can possibly help them
  - ii. How they can help you

4. REMEMBER THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU SELLING THEM, OR THEM SELLING YOU.

It is about you both leveraging each others connection and resources to put both parties in a position to eventually grow their bottom line.

THIS IS THE POND. IT IS NOT THE FISH.

5. Work together on the lowest hanging fruit.

6. Both parties should be clear on deliverables and the time frame for deliverables

7. Each party has the responsibility to show/demonstrate how they can be helped, i.e. what they need and in what form

8. Establish an agreement and procedure to talk about difficulties
  - a. Take intractable difficulties to a No! "Look, I'm not comfortable doing this, because..."
9. Accept not all folks are a fit for each other
10. Join a networking group and practice, practice, practice.
11. Remember this is a process of building trust. Start with small steps. Building trust takes time. This process is not an overnight sensation!