

# INFOCUS

## NETWORKING

Networking is one of the key links to opportunity. The power of networking to forge meaningful relationships and maintain them is undisputed. However, a lot of time spent networking is unproductive; just going-through-the-motions without results. The collecting of businesscards and the seeking out of VIPs like a big-game hunter is not effective networking, it's just collecting scalps. And while online social networks offer great flexibility and the ability to touch many, it is the results of the networks that should be measured not just the numbers. This Infocus looks at the strategies of traditional and newer networking, and warns you about the things to avoid.

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# NETWORKING RULES

Social networking may be the buzz, but don't think for a minute it completely replaces older style and face-to-face networking. **Cameron Cooper** reports.

**As a prolific user** of social media tools such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, one might expect Iggy Pintado to declare that traditional networking is dead.

Not so, says the former IBM and Telstra executive, who is now Chief Networking Officer of his own online networking consultancy ConnectGen.

"Despite the fact that I really love online networking it's definitely not a replacement for face-to-face networking," Pintado says.

Named on a list of the top 25 most-connected business networkers in Australia, Pintado believes social media is a great 'enabler' that facilitates connections and allows companies to get closer to their consumers.

"[It's about] finding a way to connect with them either by pressing the flesh through traditional networking or joining groups or staying connected on online networks, which is what seems to be the trend."

## Forging ties

Once only played out more formally in conference centres through industry groupings or functions, or more casually in settings such as a golf course, networking is now undergoing its greatest change in decades as Twitter et al come to the fore.

What has not changed is that expanding professional and business contacts is often the best word-of-mouth marketing tool at an organisation's disposal. While for many the aim is to clinch a deal, for others the motivation

is simply about increasing knowledge, making friends or learning from inspiring individuals.

Kim McGuinness, Managing Director of Network Central agrees that social media supports rather than replaces traditional networking "because it's more time effective, but I think it's critical to keep that face-to-face connection. I don't believe that you actually network with one person: you network with the network behind them," she says.

At its best, McGuinness says networking allows people to stand out from the crowd because "there's too much clutter, too many people, too many newsletters, too many emails and telephone calls, too much everything".

That does not mean being an extroverted show-off: a moderated approach is required whereby social and business contacts are accumulated gradually on the back of an underlying commitment to integrity.

"That's what I mean by standing out," she explains. "I don't mean saying 'hi, look at me, look at me'; it's to have absolute integrity in your dealings and the people you deal with because karma does come back and bite you."

## Setting rules

Whether pursuing traditional or new social media forums, some golden rules apply to networking:

- Ensure you are authentic with people to build lasting relationships.

- Define the short- and long-term goals you want to achieve.

- Listen to colleagues and try to find solutions that help them or their business.

- Share relevant and interesting material with your contact group.

- Create and maintain a detailed database of contacts that includes their special interests.

- Follow through quickly and efficiently on referrals you are given to demonstrate respect.

Of course, there are other tried-and-tested rules for people who network at conferences or functions: avoid hard-selling yourself; meet new people rather than just chatting to friends; initiate introductions and move politely around the room; and resist the temptation to drink too much alcohol (you are there to network, not party, after all).

Some professions, in particular, have not enjoyed a great reputation for networking skills, with lawyers among them. Adrian Dayton, an American attorney and author of *Social media for lawyers: Twitter edition*, says that developing strong connections is even more important with today's softer economic conditions because marketing, conferencing and travel budgets are under some pressure. In such an environment, he believes executives have to step up to the plate.

"And social media tools really give them the power to do that," he says. ➤➤



**Kim McGuinness,**  
Network Central

## “Despite the fact that I really love online networking it’s definitely not a replacement for face-to-face networking.” – Iggy Pintado, ConnectGen



**Adrian Dayton,**  
attorney and  
author

Rather than attending expensive seminars or rolling out a major marketing campaign, Dayton says contacts can be made and messages conveyed through a blog, for example. He admits some business leaders fear social media networks will result in the loss of control of an organisation’s message. “But it’s really kind of an illusion because they’ve never been able to control what their people say when they go to cocktail parties or when they go to networking events.”

Dayton, who was recently in Australia to run a social media boot camp for lawyers, does issue a word of warning, however. Do not try to convert your entire team to forums such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

“It’s an impossible task and you’ll get so bogged down with the nay-sayers that it won’t work, so instead find a few individuals that you see as potential champions.”



**Iggy Pintado,**  
ConnectGen

### Going online

At ConnectGen, Pintado advocates the adoption of the four Ps – purpose, profile, participation and persistence – for effective online networking. Here is how it works:

**Purpose:** do not blindly use social media forums unless you know your goals. “People say ‘I’m on Facebook because my mate’s on Facebook. That’s actually not a purpose, that’s just peer pressure,’” Pintado says.

### Communication the key

Here are some key ways to improve your networking communication skills.

- Learn to listen: you will forge stronger contacts if you show a genuine interest in people.
- Start a conversation: have an icebreaker for those sometimes-awkward moments when first meeting people at a function (it can be as simple as asking a person why they are attending).
- Ask open-ended questions: who, what, where, when, why and how questions open up discussions and avoid yes/no responses.
- Provide valuable feedback: responding to people’s queries or enquiries during or after an event creates rapport.
- Improve your writing: the rise of social media forums such as blogs has given new impetus to this very old skill. Intelligent writing promotes your thought-leadership credentials.



**Profile:** make sure you are visible in the online world. “Set up a very compelling profile that represents who you are and how you want to be perceived.”

**Participation:** join online groups, invite others to join you, and engage with others to demonstrate you are active on a social network. “Otherwise it’s a bit like going to a party and sitting in the corner, and at the end of the party going ‘well, that was a bit boring.’”

**Persistence:** do not expect immediate outcomes after joining online networks. “You’ve got to keep working on it.”

Whether going online or to functions, Network Central’s McGuinness reaffirms the importance of forging genuine relationships rather than building a massive database just for the sake of it. And, after years of experience, she knows that people who try to overly sell themselves at a conference will come up short.

“Just go there and enjoy yourself and meet people you like,” she says. “You can’t fake enjoyment, you can’t fake true concern for somebody’s relationship... So unless you’re authentic and real it’s a waste of time.” **MT**

**Cameron Cooper is a Brisbane-based business writer.**

**FOR FURTHER READING SEE DIRECTORY ON PAGE 47.**



You need to identify your own networking style and learn the skills for effective networking. AIM’s annual National Networking Week events in August encourages Australian managers to better understand the business opportunities and interpersonal connections developed through effective networking. We look forward to seeing you at one of our events.

| DATE                 | TOPIC/SERIES                         | SPEAKER   | REGION     | TIME   | COST  | BOOKING DETAILS   |   |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|------------|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Qld &amp; NT</b>  |                                      |   |            |  |   |   |   |
| Tuesday 3 August     | Make a Name for Yourself             | Scott Ginsberg, International Speaker   | Brisbane   | 7.15am for 7.30pm-9am Breakfast Event              | Tickets from \$88                               | To register and for further information: 1300 882 895<br>www.aimevents.com.au<br>events@aimqld.com.au |   |
| Tuesday 3 August     | The Power of Free                    | Scott Ginsberg, International Speaker   | Gold Coast | 1pm to 2pm Seminar Session                         | No Charge                                       |   |   |
| Tuesday 3 August     | AIM Open House                       | Program of Speakers   | Gold Coast | 9am-5pm. All day series of seminars                | No Charge                                       |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | AIM Open House                       | Program of Speakers   | Brisbane   | 9am-5pm  | No Charge                                       |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | Make a Name for Yourself             | Scott Ginsberg, International Speaker   | Townsville | 7.15am for 7.30pm-9am Breakfast Event              | Tickets from \$88                               |   |   |
| Thursday 5 August    | Networking... Pure and Simple        | Vivienne Anthon, Networking Author and Speaker                                  | Brisbane   | 5.45pm for 6pm-7.30pm Cocktail Event               | Tickets from \$44                               |   |   |
| Thursday 5 August    | Make a Name for Yourself             | Scott Ginsberg, International Speaker   | Cairns     | 7.15am for 7.30pm-9am Breakfast Event              | Tickets from \$88                               |   |   |
| Friday 6 August      | Make a Name for Yourself             | Scott Ginsberg, International Speaker   | Darwin     | 7.15am for 7.30pm-9am Breakfast Event              | Tickets from \$88                               |   |   |
| <b>NSW &amp; ACT</b> |                                      |   |            |  |   |   |   |
| Tuesday 3 August     | The Secrets of Networking Success    | Bill Hardy, International Speaker   | Sydney     | 5.30pm for 6pm-7.45pm Masterclass with Hardys Wine | AIM Fellows and Associate Fellows only          |   | To register and for further information: 1300 651 811<br>www.aimnsw.com.au/networking<br>events@aimnsw.com.au |
| Wednesday 4 August   | The Secrets of Networking Success    | Bill Hardy, International Speaker   | Canberra   | 5.30pm for 6pm-7.45pm Masterclass with Hardys Wine | AIM Fellows and Associate Fellows only          |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | How to be a Better Networker         | Keynote speaker   | Sydney     | 5.30pm for 6pm-7.30pm Networking Event             | Free for Members, \$45 Non-Members              |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | How to be a Better Networker         | Keynote speaker   | Canberra   | 5.30pm for 6pm-7.30pm Networking Event             | Free for Members, \$45 Non-Members              |   |   |
| <b>Vic &amp; Tas</b> |                                      |   |            |  |   |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | Speed NetworkingNight                | Bev Brough  | Melbourne  | 5.45pm-7.45pm                                      | Member \$25, Non-Member \$45                    | To register and for further information: (03) 9534 8181<br>enquiry@aimvic.com.au                      |   |
| Thursday 5 August    | Speed NetworkingNight                | Bev Brough  | Hobart     | 6pm-8pm  | Member \$25, Non-Member \$39.99                 | To register and for further information: (03) 6224 9555<br>enquiry@aimtasmania.com.au                 |   |
| <b>WA</b>            |                                      |   |            |  |   |   |   |
| Wednesday 4 August   | Site Visit – Fremantle Football Club | Gary Walton, Chief Operating Officer, FFC and Todd Curley, Assistant Coach, FFC | Fremantle  | 5.15pm-7.30pm                                      | Professional Member \$20, Affiliate Member \$35 | To register and for further information: (08) 9383 8000<br>aimwa@aimwa.com<br>www.aimwa.com           |   |

# National Networking Week 2010 2-8 AUGUST

# STRATEGIC NETWORKING

Successful networking doesn't just happen, it takes hard work and serious strategising.  
By **Cameron Cooper**.



**Robyn Henderson,**  
Networking To Win

**She is now regarded** as one of Australia's consummate networkers, but Robyn Henderson admits it was not always so.

Many years ago, Henderson remarked to a mentor that listening to business colleagues rave on and on about cricket and football at functions could be a bore.

"He said to me, 'Robyn, it's not about you, it's about your clients and what they are interested in,'" she recalls. "That was a real wake-up for me and now I am very interested in sports and I can speak about most codes."

For Henderson, the founder of Networking to Win and author of numerous books on networking, the anecdote is a reminder of the importance of strategy when developing connections socially or in the business world. She plans assiduously, ensures that the needs of her clients are carefully managed and makes a point of taking an interest in others.

"I always say anyone will talk to you for 20 minutes if you're not speaking about yourself."



**Bev Brough,**  
Master Networking

## Developing a strategy

Bev Brough, Director of Master Networking and co-author of *Strategic networking*, is adamant that rigorous processes are essential for good networking outcomes. She says aimlessly attending conferences or events does not cut it.

"It's not enough just to get a business card and then file it away... How large can your rubber band grow when you have all these cards?"

Instead, Brough breaks down her networking processes along these lines:

- Acquire contacts at events and through friends, family and business.
- Determine what to do with those leads and categorise contacts into a priority list (who will you meet over a coffee, speak to on the phone or send a newsletter?).

- Activate a regular follow-up process that suits your client's or contact's needs.
- Grow your business using the database to foster alliances and gain referrals.

The reason for being so methodical is simple, says Brough. "Otherwise all you have is a list of names."

Henderson also leaves nothing to chance, adhering to the three Ps: preparation, proactive attendance and professional follow-up. Regardless of the event, some forward planning is required. Do you have your business card? If it is appropriate, are you carrying relevant promotional material? Have you scheduled 15 minutes the day after the event to follow up contacts?

Failure to engage in such detail is foolish, according to Henderson.

"If you are just going to end up going to different events every day this week and not follow up with anyone then it's a waste of time and your money."

## Building better relationships

Selecting the right forums for acquiring contacts is also crucial. The rise of social media networking notwithstanding, Henderson remains a fan of face-to-face meetings because they foster stronger, more trusting relationships in the long run.

At the same time, networkers seeking better business outcomes should target niche groups rather than taking a 'shotgun' approach.

"If I'm going looking for accountants or lawyers or motor dealers then I want to be really focused with my alliances... I think some people are generally so unclear about what they're looking for that it's hard for people to connect, whereas if you say 'I'm looking for a motor dealer' someone might say, 'Here's Joe, he's a motor dealer'."

In the wake of the financial crisis, Henderson argues that forging trusting business networks is more important

than ever. Contracts or deals can be negotiated without testiness, and surety over the payment of bills eases anguish.

"I'm seeing a lot more transparency between suppliers and customers (where they say) 'this is our budget, we're not playing games'."

Henderson says this is not a take-it-or-leave-it scenario but one in which both sides are asking for understanding.

"And I think that in the long term, that will really develop much stronger connections."

While some networkers try to build an ever-bigger database or acquire more and more friends on Facebook or LinkedIn, bigger is not always better. Brough maintains that it is perfectly acceptable to cut ties with a business contact if the relationship is not mutually beneficial.

"Sometimes networking is just like dating," she says. "You meet somebody, you might date them for a while but you know it doesn't always work out. So in that case you just move on."

## Networking KPIs

Key performance indicators are not typically associated with networking, but, for salespeople in particular, they can be useful.

Henderson says factoring in KPIs around networking activity makes sense. Should you meet or connect with clients weekly, fortnightly or monthly? Remember, with larger organisations, there may be more decision-makers involved.

"If that is the case then it's not enough to go to a network once and think you're going to walk away with business. It's about always being there, and the more they see you the more they build that trust."

Henderson uses a networking tracker to monitor who she meets and how many times she connects. The system ensures she follows up with clients, distributes fresh and interesting information to them and invites them to relevant functions. It also provides a guide to what value the relationship delivers.

"You can start to track which are the networks that are worth (pursuing)."

Brough agrees that there is no shame in attaching a value to business relationships.

"There needs to be a return on investment with our networking time. However, you have to realise that the return won't be immediate. It takes time."

## Achieving your goals

In a similar vein, networking can play a vital role in achieving the goals you set yourself. Do you want to target a board appointment? Can joining a

particular network create an opening for a career change? How can stronger ties with clients deliver long-term marketing or sale gains? Knowing the goal is essential so that any networking activity can be structured with the endgame in mind.

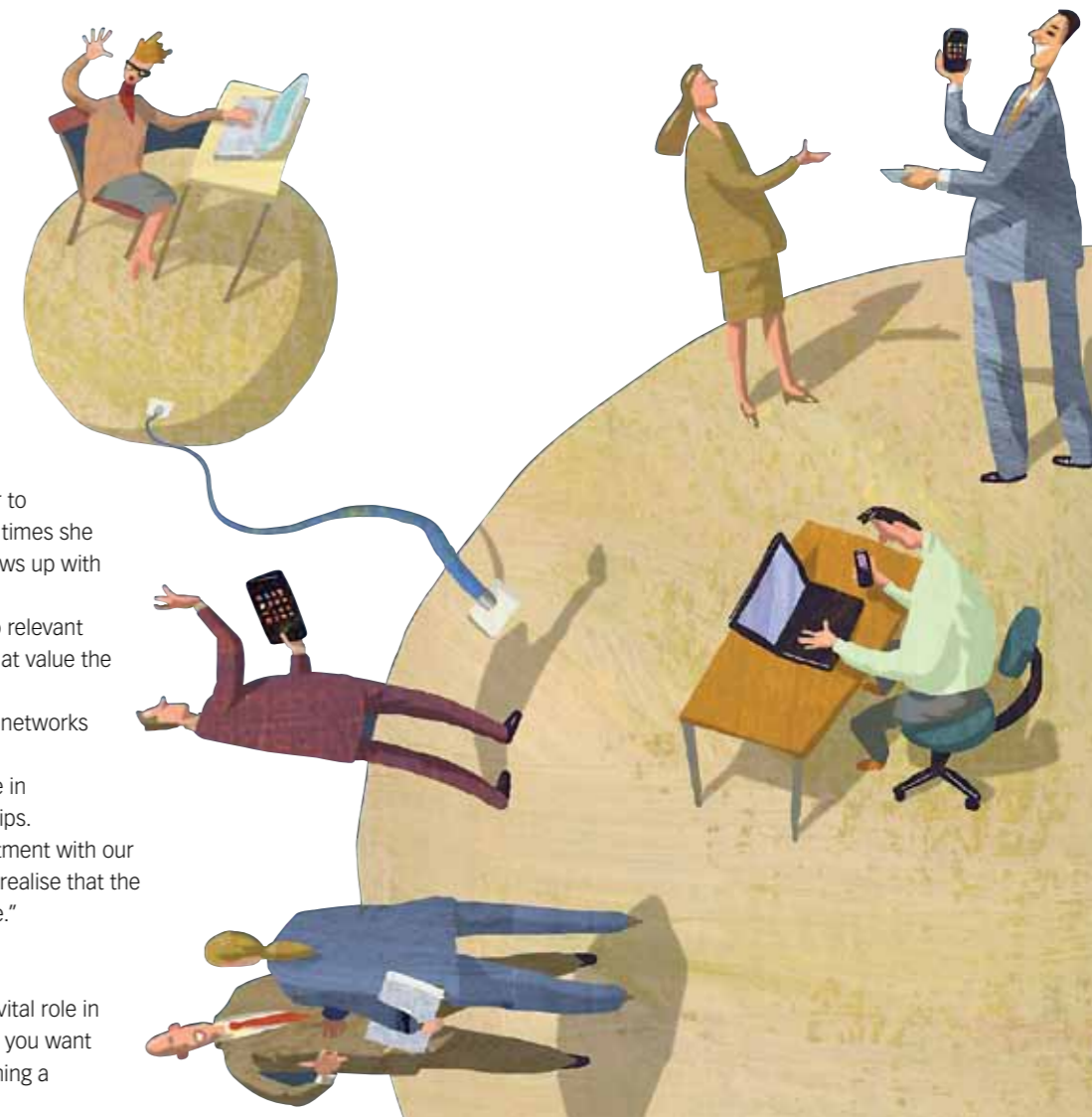
Henderson says, for example, if a board role is the objective then it makes sense to attend functions where directors will gather, or to enrol in appropriate directorship courses.

"You need to go where the board decision-makers are and I think that's about identifying an industry or a profession and investing in yourself."

Regardless of aims, Henderson argues all networkers should take a long-term, strategic approach to wooing and keeping business contacts.

"Business is people to people, and I believe that you build your networks before you need them... It's about helping others, and then when it's your turn to ask for help there are lots of people who can help you because you've already paid it forward." **MC**

**Cameron Cooper is a Brisbane-based business writer.**



# WHAT NETWORKING ISN'T

Turning up to conferences and functions with a stack of business cards isn't going to cut it.

**For a dynamic management** consultant who has forged a reputation for connecting people and ideas, James Adonis has a blunt message about networking.

"People are sick and tired of the term 'networking' and everything that it represents," he says.

Not that Adonis, the Managing Director of consulting firm Team Leaders and author of *Corporate punishment: Smashing the management cliches for leaders in a new world* – does not place any store in the value of networking. It is simply that he does not abide by the old rules of endlessly attending functions, flinging around business cards or, in the case of new social media networks such as Facebook, bombarding so-called friends with business-related messages.

"That is not networking," he says. "That's just being annoying." Adonis dislikes the cliché 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' because it suggests that simply knowing as many people as possible will guarantee success. Instead, he has developed five theories about networking that outline what networking is, and is not, all about.

## 1. It's not who you know but to whom you are connected

Adonis makes the point that a habitual conference attendee may have 10,000 business cards in his or her contact list, but if only 20 of those cards represent valuable business links then that is the sum value of the database.

"What drives the connection is the relationship," Adonis says. "And the relationship is determined not on meaningless contact but on genuine, sincere relationship building where you actually get to know each other."

## 2. It's not who you know but who knows you

Adonis says when he started out in consulting he rushed from event to event, built a database of contacts and followed up with them. All the work came to nothing.

He came to the conclusion that success comes down to who knows him. Through books, columns in newspapers and speaking engagements at seminars, he has built a profile and established himself as a go-to person on management strategies. Adonis says it is

important to showcase credentials in a way that attracts attention "rather than going after people one by one" at conferences.

## 3. It's not who you know but what you do

Early in his career, Adonis learnt a valuable lesson. He wanted to work on radio and made contact with Sydney radio broadcasting giant Alan Jones, who gave Adonis his number and suggested he get in touch if he needed assistance. Intimidated by Jones's large reputation, Adonis did not call.

"You can have the most influential person on your database, but it means nothing unless you actually do something with it," Adonis says.

## 4. It's not who you know but who you are

Adonis says it is awful watching some people working the room at business functions as they snub most of the audience in an effort to talk only to VIPs. The clear conclusion is that your behaviour at such functions sends out a message to people about your ethics and style. Getting a VIP's business card means little if, in the process, you have created a poor impression.

## 5. It's not what you know but how you use it

Adonis says people think knowledge is power. "And it isn't at all," he says. He draws the analogy that it is possible to study boxing through books and videos to acquire information about the history of the sport and techniques required to be successful in it.

"But nothing would change the fact that I can only punch like an amateur."

Adonis says talent and action is much more important than redundant knowledge. Sure, he agrees, go to networking events and meet and greet... then act. Demonstrate your skills to people and give them a reason to stay in contact with you. [MT](#)



**James Adonis,**  
Team Leaders

