

Everything I Need to Know About Success I Learned Through Networking



As a Consultant, I attend a lot of networking events, industry association programs, and one-on-one meetings for breakfast, coffee or other food-related events. Whenever I network or attend events, I always tell people that it was worth my time and money if I gained just one creative idea or contact from the experience. This past month I really put that concept to the test by attending numerous networking meetings, including one tele-networking event!

Here are a few nuggets that I picked up as I networked my way through the past month.

1. **Be Bold!** The Woman's Club of Minneapolis recently featured motivational speaker Ann Ulrich, who said, "We create our own possibilities for success by boldly creating opportunity from possibility." According to Ann, combine possibility with perseverance and professionalism and you have your own personalized recipe for success. How do you create your own possibilities? By being bold of course.
2. **Think Big.** Sandra Wakefield, an advocate of Brilliant Living (her TV program bears that name), is also an advocate of brilliant networking. She recently brought together a group of like-minded women with the intent of connecting them with an organization that could help make their business goals and personal dreams come true. Not only did she inspire these women to think big she inspired them to think about how taking their businesses to the million dollar (or more!) level. Now that's thinking big.
3. **Tell Your Stories.** Tom Bengtson, owner, publisher and editor of Northwestern Financial Review, has been in the industry long enough to know what connects a writer to the reader or a speaker to the audience: personal stories. He encouraged me to share my own personal stories in my writing and my speaking engagements. According to Tom, "We learn something about the person who shares their stories, and there is value in that. But the real reason to share your stories is to learn something about yourself." The message? Sometimes the best lessons in life we teach ourselves.
4. **Develop a "kitchen cabinet."** Erin Dady works closely with aspiring women political candidates. A panelist at the recent Joint Dinner of Women's Professional Associations, Erin shared some advice that highlighted the importance of having a trusted group of advisors on your team that she called, "your kitchen cabinet." These were the trusted men and women that you surround yourself with around your kitchen table. This powerful network is a key success factor when running for office. It can also be the key to success if you are climbing the corporate ladder (think mentors) or a growing a successful small business (think advisory board). Net, net, regardless of what you call them, no woman should be without the equivalent of a powerful "kitchen cabinet."
5. **Filter Advice.** Judge Susan Burke, recent panelist at the Joint Dinner of Women's Professional Associations, spoke about her recent experience in running for public office. In the early stages, every person she encountered (including her boss, husband and parents) gave her a list of reasons why she shouldn't run for office. That being the case, what finally compelled her to run for office? "I learned to beware advice from people who have a vested interest in the outcome," stated Judge Burke. The lesson? Seek advice but ultimately you need to make the final decision.

This past month I was lucky enough to obtain the five great nuggets I shared with you above. To recap: don't be afraid to be bold, think big, or tell your stories. But during the process, remember to surround yourself with trusted advisors but be sure to filter any advice you receive. Not bad for a month's worth of networking. Don't you agree?

Regina Barr is a management consultant and speaker with a special passion for helping women achieve leadership success. Regina helps companies develop strategies to attract, develop and retain women leaders. Her consulting firm, Red Ladder, Inc., also helps organizations and their leaders develop their full potential through strategic project management and coaching. For more information visit www.RedLadder.com or www.RedLadder.blogs.com.

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