



Taking Back Control and Selling with Soul

'No-Nonsense' Marketing and Social Media Training



3. Your Offline Strategy

Networking Meetings

Whether you visit formal business networking or a more relaxed meeting, it is important that you are consistent and involve this activity as part of your marketing plan.

Networking is so effective as it allows you to connect face-to-face with your potential clients or others that can help you to attract people to your business (i.e. by way of referrals, collaborations, or other useful connections). Therefore, it supports and strengthens the connections you make online, and also encourages more online connections to be made (so both online and offline networking work hand-in-hand).

In order to make the most out of offline networking for yourself and your business it is wise to:

1. Start by attending lots of different groups, of different sizes, locations, single/mixed gender, and corporate/self-employed. However, always make sure that all or some of the delegates are in your relevant target market. HER Business Revolution women's networking meetings are a good place to start!
2. Once you have narrowed down what sort of networking groups and activities most suit you and your business then be sure to find as many of these types of group to explore. E.g. If a single-sex networking group has gained you lots of useful contacts, and seems to be more suited to your product/service, then find similar groups in your target location/s and attend these!
3. Once you have attended groups that suit you (from exercises 1 and 2 above) on a regular basis you will begin to know which of these groups/meetings are the most successful, therefore these are the ones to carry on attending on a regular basis.

4. Now you know what groups and events to attend, make sure you check out the delegate list of each meeting or event in advance, and highlight those you would like to build a business relationship with.
5. Try and chat to as many people as possible at each meeting/event, however make sure you focus on those you have previously highlighted.
6. Always introduce yourself with a smile, handshake and a business card. Even if you have briefly met a person before it is a good idea to remain professional, therefore a hug is not likely to be appropriate (unless you are really familiar).
7. Don't introduce yourself with a robot-like sales pitch. Try to mix it up a bit, and even include some personal details if you feel comfortable.
8. In conversation don't focus on the sale. It is more important to focus on building meaningful business relationships, making useful contacts, and seeking new opportunities.
9. Look for things in common during your conversation (both business experiences and personal attributes) as this helps to build relationships and makes you more memorable. E.g. If the person you are speaking with has children like yourself, then this is a subject you can connect with and chat about.
10. As well as using networking to gain contacts, build relationships, and eventually make sales, also use groups to build your confidence by offering to be a speaker, and share your business story, or give an insight into your business/products/services.
11. Never talk negatively about your competitors – EVER!
12. A great thing about networking is that, as well as meeting new people, it also encourages referrals, which in turn encourages sales. By building trust with other business delegates, this means they are more likely to recommend you to others (both who attend the relevant networking group and who don't).
13. Always leave a meeting/event by saying goodbye to as many people as possible who you have spoken with. This, along with a beaming smile, leaves a lasting impression and makes you memorable!

People and The Power of Connections

With the rise and changes to social media activities in recent years, the importance of connections to promote your business have become increasingly important.

Online connections are not only key, but the most powerful are those offline, face to face, as these are people that become your tribe and fans and follow what you do on a more regular basis.

Usually a connection starts online, or briefly face-to-face, then connection is made online – both support one another.

Then regular touch points with this connection, online and offline, develops it from an acquaintance to a long-term valuable business relationship, and even into friendship.

For a few of these connections, the friendships develop closely, due to these having the same interests and life situations to you, and these are the people that will promote, advocate, support and guide you in life, and help your business grow and prosper.

For some other of these connections, conversations will develop from that of a client relationship, to possible Consultant, Recruit, Staff Member or Referrer of business/customers to you.

Consultants and Referrals

Consultants (or Recruits as they are sometimes known) are people that work with you on a freelance/self-employed basis who bring in their own customers and sales in order to grow the business. These can earn a percentage of sales, commission, or hourly rate, and can allow you to grow your business quickly by sharing the workload.

Referrals are customers/sales that come from a third-party source, whether it be another business, a previous customer, or another person who can financially or otherwise benefit from sending work your way. This can be on an official or unofficial basis, but it is a good idea to have some sort of formal agreement in place if money is involved.

Word of Mouth and Support

Word of mouth is easily forgettable when marketing your business, however the recommendations, testimonials, and success studies from others are so important, especially in a world where consumers have so much choice.

People buy from where makes them comfortable and feel good, therefore this feeling is heightened if someone they know endorses their purchase by way of recommendation.

Your current customer base is not only useful in gaining feedback and conducting market research to grow your business, but can help you sell your products and services by way of general one-off recommendation or testimonial, or a longer term more formal referral or affiliate scheme.

Above all, connections and long-lasting relationships are vital for the sustainability of your business as; these people can support, empower and uplift you in your life; promote you and give you advise/education in your business; and provide you with other valuable contacts and open up opportunities for you along the way.

This is the reason that it is paramount that you treat everyone you meet and speak to as a VIP and with upmost respect, especially as you never know when you might need to call upon them and their expertise on your journey.

Events

As an entrepreneur, being taken seriously can be a challenge, therefore it's important to build up your credibility. One viable way of doing this is by hosting an event.

When you host an event (or sponsor or attend someone else's event), your business is suddenly in the spotlight and you can be transformed into a business leader, so recognised as an authority in your community and field, regardless of your experience or age.

What could be your reasons for hosting an event?

What other events could you exhibit at or sponsor?

When planning an event it is important to answer the following:

Why? _____

When? _____

Who? _____

What? _____

How? _____

You can then use the point you have made above to choose a suitable venue that will fit in with your event theme, have the capacity to accommodate your attendees, and suit the time of year you would like to host your event.

When researching into an event venue you must also consider the budget you have for your venue, and whether this depends on the number of attendees or not (i.e. are you fully funding your event to thank your clients, etc, or will your event incur an attendance charge for your attendees?)

Where could you host your event?

Other things you will need for your event are:

- Decorations (flowers, balloons, table runners, etc)
- Food and drink
- DJ/music/audio equipment
- Screen/projector/laptop
- Photographer/videographer
- Speakers/Workshops/Stands/Etc
- Tables and chairs
- Banners, pens, promotional items, etc
- Event staff

It is helpful to write down people that you know that can offer the above products and services, to create your 'little black book' of contacts that you can call upon – you can also be a little cheeky and ask for little favours (relating to costs and extras) if you know someone personally, rather than just finding them on the internet!

It's ok if you don't know people who can help you pull together your event, as if you ask your current contacts directly, or on social media, most people are happy to provide recommendations.

Always remember when selecting providers that you are looking for 'value' and NOT 'cheap' – it is important to maintain a high level of quality, or your event could have a negative impact on your business reputation.

Who could you call upon to support you?

As well as maintaining quality, it is also a good idea to keep a close eye on costs while planning your event. You can use a simple spreadsheet with the following headings to keep track of your costs and ensure that you are sticking to your budget.

Once you have an idea of your event costs in advance, this will help you set your ticket price (if applicable). The price of your tickets must be reasonable based on similar events in your area, as if they are too high then they will not sell. If you find that your costs outweigh your reasonable ticket price, then you are best to either find ways of cutting costs, or consider absorbing some of the event costs yourself (if this would benefit your business in the long-term).

Using event booking systems, such as Eventbrite, is the easiest way to sell tickets, however remember that this type of system carries a charge (to either you or your attendee), but if offering a free event there is no charge. On these types of booking systems, you can download your guest list, send out event invites, and track your sales; therefore in my opinion the cost is small compared to the benefits the system brings.

When you have planned your event you need to tell people about it. For larger events (more than 100 people) start promoting it at least 6 months of lead time, however smaller events can be promoted in just a few months.

To promote your event effectively you should use a mixture of the following channels:

- Social media
- Mailouts to your database (including existing clients)
- Leaflets/stands at other events/banners
- Media – newspaper, magazines, radio
- Booking system invitations
- Face-to-face – asking and networking - Old fashioned paper invitation!

Note: Whatever methods of promotion you use to promote your event, the message should never be salesy and pushy – an event is a way to create awareness of you, your business, and your brand and not to be a direct sales tool to force people to purchase.

To ensure that your event runs to plan on the day always maintain contact with your venue and supplier, etc, every step of the way and so they know the exact layout and format of the event on the day. It is a good idea to get to your venue early to set up, giving you wriggle room for anything that could go wrong, allowing you time to relax and resolve.

Create an itinerary for your event, and ensure everyone involved knows the plan. This will depend on the type of event, however suggested format follows:

1. Pre-drinks/canapes/sign in/networking
2. Introduction – to you, your business, and why you are hosting the event
3. Speaker(s)/workshops
4. Round up – thank attendees, mention the future!
5. Food, drinks and networking

For a larger event, you would break in the middle for lunch/refreshments.

Other things to consider at your event are:

1. Photos and videos – take plenty so you can use for promotional purposes afterwards. It might be a good idea to employ someone to do this on your behalf, so you are free to be the ‘Hostess with the Mostess’ on the day, that’s if you have the budget!
2. Network – speak to as many people as possible, not just the people you are pursuing as potential customers! You should never be salesy in your conversation, focus on getting to know the person and what they are all about!
3. Share your knowledge – use your speaking slots to show your knowledge of your industry and give free advice and tips, which helps to build your credibility in your field.
4. Show your personality – use the event to allow people to get to know the person behind your business – you! Always remember that people buy from people!
5. Most importantly – Don’t sweat the small stuff, and just have fun!

Below is a simple list of the sorts of post-event promotion and follow up you could do from your event – which should not only tell people how amazing you are at putting on events, but should encourage more engagement with you and your business, attract more interest (and hopefully more clients/customers!) and allow you to move into different networking circles.

- Social media – Regular posts about your event, with images and video clips, to showcase its success. Encourage shares and engagement by asking questions and offering solutions to problems in your posts. Creative a promo video from your event, tailored to sell one of your products or services can also work well on social media (especially as a paid ad).
- Press Release – Writing a press release and sending it to local and national media will help you move into different areas and networking circles outside of your usual market. The press loves a fresh story, especially if it has been written for them, so it is a good idea to build a list of good PR contacts that will support you by publishing your features.
- Mailshot or Newsletter – Share the news about your event and what happened in a mailout to your database. This should spark conversations about the event, that can then lead to sales.
- Thank you – Send a thank you email (or card) to attendees (if you contain an offer or an incentive this works well to encourage custom).

- Sales follow ups – From conversations at your event, make calls and send emails to follow up anyone that showed interest in your business and its products/services.
- Network – Share the success of your event, and tell people about your next one!

Follow up is paramount to the success of your event, as most events do not generate sales there and then on their own, the post-event promotion is key to turning any leads into sales.

Due to this, only use gentle sales prompts and calls to action in your follow up and post-event promotion, and never be salesy or pushy!

Tips to Pull Off a Successful Event

1. Be clear about your why - Try to be clear on your objectives for the event. To build a community? For people to network? To generate leads and sales? To have fun? Generate PR? Build-up your reputation? Start with putting your thinking cap on and brainstorm on the above questions. Don't have all the answers yet? Don't let that hold you back. Start experimenting. You will have a much clearer idea about your WHY after the first event – just in case you struggle with this.
2. Publicise - There's not much point putting in the effort to organise your event if it's not well publicised. Get the word out there using all available means; your current business network, social media, perhaps even targeted marketing. If you can, build a community of attendees that already know each other; this should ensure more interaction and discussion between the sessions.
3. Make it easy - Make it simple for attendees to register for the event. Depending upon the size of the event, consider using a pre-made registration application. Having people register in advance helps you estimate the attendance ahead of time, and it gets a commitment from attendees.
4. Attract awesome speakers - Your attendees are there for the speakers (and the networking!), so it's important to attract speakers who offer relevant experience and passion. The choice of speakers will vary greatly depending upon your event type and scale, but it's worth investing time in getting this right!
5. Make it inspirational rather than educational - Ask the speakers to focus on inspiring attendees rather than teaching them something. Instead of coming away with a technique or two to implement when they get back to the office, attendees came away fired up and inspired to go home, kick ass and build better products.

6. Choose the venue wisely - A good choice of venue is very important. Make sure the venue is up-scale, is appropriate to your event's needs (for example, audio / visual set up, space for break-out sessions, access to food / drink), is easy to find and has plenty of parking. Nowadays, many hotels will allow you to hold a networking event in their lobby or patio area, and often you can get the space for free if the hotel bar is connected to the space. Also, don't forget, if your attendees are coming from far and wide, it's better that the venue is geographically centrally located.
7. Spend money on branding the event - If you have the budget, branding the event can build an ambience and get everyone psyched up and engaged on the day.
8. Make event check-in super smooth - It's a great idea to have attendees check in, even if you aren't charging for an event, that way you can track attendance, and if you ask for their email address, you can follow up and announce future events. But don't draw out the registration process.
9. Meet everyone - Make sure you introduce yourself to every person who attends. Welcome them, and focus on talking about what they do, not what you do. Be a great listener, and take a genuine interest in them and their business. They'll remember you for it.
10. Be a connector - As you meet and greet, constantly look for opportunities to connect people who would benefit from meeting each other. Keep track of these connections, and follow up next time you see them. Find out if they benefited from the introduction.
11. Recruit anchors - There are always a few people at any event who are off in a corner, not talking to anyone. Get volunteers to be anchors for your event. Their job is to make sure everyone is talking with someone.
12. Provide space and fuel for networking - Attendees will probably derive just as much value from the networking and discussions between sessions. So, you have to make room and time for that.
13. Follow up, and do it again - Follow up with your attendees. Ask how they liked the event, and get ideas from them about how it could be better. Then plan the next one. If you follow this formula, you'll see your events grow and grow.
14. Remember that things will go wrong - Don't stress out, above all else, stay cool and breathe. things will go wrong. don't worry about it. for now: just get started, be creative, embrace the unknown, and have fun!

Alternative Media

It is good to remember that you can strengthen your brand image and reputation using other public media, such as radio, TV, print media (newspapers, magazines, flyers, etc), bill boards, signs, and other public relations channels.

Consider who your idea client is, then look at what they read, watch, or where they hang out offline to determine where is best to invest your time and money to showcase your business.