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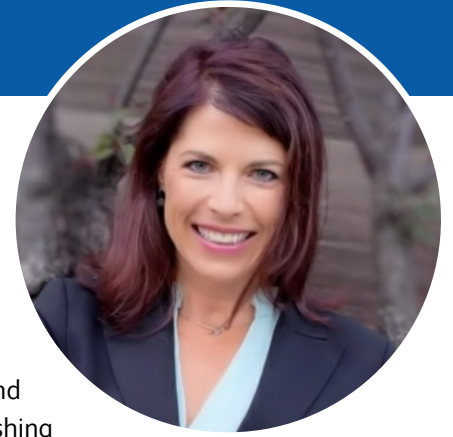


Networking Tips: How to Build a More Profitable Network of Prospects, Clients and Referrers

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executives and
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approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

*Improving
Performance*

*Navigating
Transitions*

*Accelerating
Results*

As a business leader, how effective are you in engaging with others? Before you answer this question, think about “engagement” in terms of a commitment to attend and an arrangement. Think about the act of being present. Consider an act or condition of being activated that involves emotional involvement or commitment. In terms of marketing, we can think of engagement as referring to any meaningful interaction.

You have under 30 seconds (some say as little as four seconds) to make a first impression, which is long lasting whether it is positive or negative. In a world filled with steady demands, multiple urgencies and budding opportunities, we simply retract out of habit or discomfort. We get lost in our technology and fail to recognize the valuable opportunities right before us.

Unfortunately, in this blur of distractions and related stress, we are losing tangible experiences, which would result in new, meaningful connections. Potential relationships and fresh ideas are going by the wayside.

An Opportunity Most People Lose

Many executives and entrepreneurs spend a lot of time traveling to conferences and client meetings. Now, during your travels, did you ever spend the time talking to the person sitting next to you? This person can become a delightful new colleague or, even better, a new client or referral source. But, for you to get this result out of a new or first interaction, people have to see that you are genuine and interested in order to start the relationship. Marketing, consulting and speaking experts Dr. Alan Weiss and Patricia Fripp state it well, “People do business with people, not companies.”

Aren’t we much more likely to do business with someone we know and like, or at least someone who is known and liked by someone we know and like? Absolutely! So, it’s simple: BE someone they know and like. Be a person of interest to them.

One caveat – Do not flirt or fawn when you hear what they do or behave in anyway that can be construed or interpreted as non-professional. Male / Female - it doesn’t matter. True persons of interest do not behave this way because they don’t have to.

7 Easy Tips to Help You Build Your Network of Prospects, Clients and Referral Sources

- 1. Remember, you have about 30 seconds to make a positive impact to start the path toward a profitable relationship.** If you do not take advantage of this opportunity, it will be gone forever and so will the chance of winning their hearts and, most importantly, their money or clients.
- 2. Unplug!** The more you are on your cell phone or blackberry, the less available you are to those around you. You are missing opportunities.
- 3. Look up and at those around you.** Assuming you are in a safe place, be willing to smile at others and look them in the eyes.

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4. **Be interested (more than interesting).** You don't have to be an amazing conversationalist to talk with others and form new relationships. You just have to be interested in them, and you do this by asking meaningful questions. Then acknowledge that you're hearing and understanding them.
5. **Make sure to exchange business cards or information.** How can you follow-up if you do not have contact information?
6. **Consider your personal presentation and self-image.** When we look good, we feel better about ourselves. And when we feel better about ourselves, we exude more confidence. When we are more confident, it seems easier to extend ourselves to others. Confidence is also a quality promoting respect and interest by others.
7. **Ask yourself (and respond appropriately), how can I help?** If there is anything in terms of quick information or ideas you can provide your new acquaintance to add value now or in the near future, this is almost certain to seal the deal on return interest. This helps ensure the start of a great new relationship that can benefit you both.

If you are attending to, present and activated with those around you, you are creating a meaningful interaction and creating mutual benefit.

Engaging with others, whether planned or spontaneous, is the simple start to promising relationships that will help you succeed.