

# Quality of Work

Rosemarie M. Rowley

**Networking, It's All About Me, NOT!**

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Networking is essential if you want to be visible in your industry. Anyone who has lost a job or is a service provider will attest to the importance of networking. What exactly is networking? In today's world it seems like everyone is looking for "what's in it for me?" Naturally, you would think that networking is all about building your own business. But that is not what it's all about. Networking is about giving and making strangers into friends; and trusted friends into clients or collaborators. Networking is also about finding trusted service providers for your business.

In order for networking to be successful, you must go with an attitude to meet and to help people. Help? Yes, you read it right; *help* others with their goals. Zig Zigler, a famous author and authority on selling, says this, "you can get what you want if you help enough people get whatever they want." So if you are looking to get something from networking, then you need to be prepared to give something. Just think how great it would be if you belonged to an organization whose

members were interested in helping each other be the best they can be?

In this dog-eat-dog business environment, it would be refreshing to find yourself in this type of collegial environment.

There are many networking organizations that I have attended only once. I found the participants to be only interested in their own agendas, and didn't seem to care about anyone else. However, I have found that there are networking groups whose missions are to enhance the lives of their members. Two in particular are The Women's Financial Group and The Cornell Club's networking group, "Women Who Lunch." These organizations were founded by women whose desire is to help women share and advance in their careers. There are many organizations out there similar to these two, and I encourage you to seek out these types of networking groups in your industry.



#### Think About This:

If you want to be visible in your industry, then you must network!

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## Networking, It's All About Me, NOT!

In order to help you network better this year, here are a few tips for you to consider:

- **Network smart and not hard.** Be selective in your networking; your time is valuable and you need to be productive. Evaluate your current memberships. Think about where your clients, prospects and/or colleagues are going to network. Is it a local, regional, or industry group? Ask yourself, "Are my current memberships useful to me?" "How can I contribute to them?" Edit, delete, and add to your list of networking groups.
- **Be prepared to network.** Make a plan and set some goals before you attend a networking event. Is there someone you want to meet at the event? Is there a client or colleague you want to contact or sit with at the event? Always be prepared with an ample supply of business cards, and a pen and paper for notes. Be sure to follow up with anything you promised or with any leads you make.
- **Know your value proposition.** This is your 30 second commercial (or elevator speech) that describes who you are and what makes you valuable in the marketplace. You may also wish to co-sponsor a networking event, which is a great way to showcase your company. This is another

way to share both your and your organization's value proposition.

- **Attitude, Attitude, Attitude.** Have a positive, helpful attitude and go with something to give. See where you can contribute your talents to either a member or to the entire group. The event could be a great time to drop off an interesting article or newsletter to your client/colleague.

In conclusion, networking is what you make it. It can be a vital part of your business career, or it can be a waste of your time. It should be about giving *and* receiving. Networking enables you to leverage your current clients, and make new contacts for future business opportunities. If you are in a corporate role, networking is not only essential to keeping you visible in the marketplace, but it will provide an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues willing to share business concepts and ideas. It will also be beneficial when deciding on hiring trusted outside consultants.

If you follow the simple steps laid out in this article, you will attract business and develop a new network of trusted colleagues. Remember, you will "reap what you sow." Now, get out there and network your socks off!!