

5 Essential Tips for Effective

Networking with the Affluent Buyer

The moment has arrived for you. You're in a crowd of heavy hitters. You can feel the energy in the room. This could be the tipping point for your business. The problem you have is that you aren't sure how to approach those who are in the room. After all, nobody here knows who you are, so they're certainly not going to make you feel welcome and introduce you to those in their group.

I've been in many situations similar to the one you may be in. These 5 tips will help you have a successful experience and have some great conversations.

The first thing you should do is be prepared to mingle with people and never talk about what you're selling. You will quickly become of the 'pariah of the party' if you're perceived as attending the event in order to solicit business. Leave the sales pitch at home. It's not the time or the place. I attended many company-sponsored events where prospects had been invited. I always made it clear that there would be no sale pitch. If they had specific questions, I encouraged them to speak with those in attendance who were already clients. If they wanted to set up a meeting after the event, I was more than happy to arrange time. If you try to work a room like this with your sales pitch, you might as well go home. Word will quickly spread and no one will talk to you.

Don't start a conversation saying, 'What do you do'? It's tacky. Ask instead about their interest in the charity. A great way to approach is by saying, "Is this your first time attending _____"? If it's not, ask what their level of involvement is with the group. "Are you a board member? Or, They (the charity) seem to be doing a lot of great work in the community. Are you involved in any of those projects"? If they have a personal involvement in the charity, they'll be very excited to talk to you about it. Eventually, the conversation will turn to you. Expect them to ask why you're there, and have a good answer ready. Again, you're not there to sell anything. You might be volunteering at the event. This is a great way to be in the room without having to pay a dime.

My next suggestion would be to limit your conversations and keep them brief. I was at a breakfast where one gentleman kept talking to a colleague and myself for over an hour. He was talking about watches. There was no good opportunity to escape without being rude. I missed talking to several people I wanted to speak with because this person was monopolizing my time with a discussion on watches. Have a 'ready made' excuse to use in situations like this. For example, "I promised Mr. Smith I'd go over a question he has over breakfast. This has been fascinating, but I really need to spend a few minutes with him before everyone heads out to golf".

Or, if you know someone else in the room who shares an interest in watches, point them out and make the introduction. They can discuss watches, and you can move on to what you need to be doing: networking.

Fourth, as you're talking to each person in the room, be thinking to yourself, "Is there a way I can help this person"? It's the law of reciprocity. If you help someone, they're more likely to do something for you in return. Could be a sale. Could be a referral. There are many ways you can help. You know your business and you know the type of contacts you're meeting. There may only be one person in the room who fits this profile. It doesn't matter. One great contact amongst the affluent will lead to many new contacts. After I had spent several years in my sales territory, over 50% of my business came from referrals. And this came from a core group of 8-10 individuals. Don't worry about quantity, worry about quality. Focus on something you have, or know, that could benefit that person. It could be an introduction to someone else you know.

Last, but definitely not least, make sure you follow up with everyone you said you would call. If they asked for a brochure, send it the very next day. If they asked you to call their Administrative Assistant, do it the next day. If you've made a favorable impression, and follow it up with sub par responsiveness, then you've wasted your time. You're being judged early, and often, by this affluent individual, and if you don't respond in an appropriate way, they'll be lost to you. Creating a favorable impression is useless, if your follow up is poor. 'Service' is exceptionally important to this group, and if you give the impression of poor service, you'll have a tough time selling them anything.

In summary, getting an opportunity to network with the affluent can take a lot of time, effort and money. Don't blow it by being an annoying sales person. Find ways to engage those present in conversation without trying to get a sales pitch worked into the conversation. Stay focussed on ways you can be of assistance to those you meet and talk to. Don't be concerned if you're not making headway in your first few conversations. You only need one gem to come out of this, not one hundred.

For more information on successfully selling to the affluent, contact me at susan@susanadamshome.com