



Just Say No to Networking!

How to build high level relationships
and strategic partnerships
with other like minded
B to B business owners.



New
**Executive
Edition**

Jim Muehlhausen

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The Level 7 Un-Networking Guide

Introduction

Just say NO to networking.

Networking has reached disease status in the contemporary American business landscape. Networking has become compulsive and damaging to our emotions and a drain on our already time-starved daily lives. Many business owners and top executives have come to their senses and now refuse to attend networking meetings. They have attended one-too-many meetings full of salespeople trying to sell to other salespeople: sellers everywhere, buyers nowhere. As an executive, walking into a networking meeting feels like jumping into a river full of piranhas.

This briefing will address what is wrong with traditional networking as well as propose an alternative relationship building format called Un-Networking.

Just Say No to Networking by Jim Muehlhausen

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Chapter 1

Stop the Insanity of Traditional Networking

Networking is NOT working! The process has been hijacked. Too many business owners attend traditional networking meetings only to find:

1. The wrong people
2. The wrong process
3. The wrong philosophy

The Wrong People

You can't have a productive meeting with the wrong people in attendance. A true network is designed around mutuality. That is, you help me and I will help you. In order for this process to work, like-minded people must be in attendance. Most small-to-medium-sized business owner selling to other businesses (B2B) find very few B2B businesses at traditional networking meetings. Instead, there are only chiropractors, realtors, solo lawyers, low-level salespeople, and professional networkers.

Networking is
NOT-working

When the wrong people are the bulk of the attendees at a networking meeting, what's the point? Sure, there are many people in attendance. But, if they are not the right type of people, isn't the meeting just a cocktail party? A good meeting of un-networkers is full of like-minded business people with similar interests.

Business people attend networking meetings to get introductions to meaningful people, in particular, prospects. But there are no prospects at networking meetings, only salespeople. Never in the history of networking has someone said;

Gosh, our copier is acting up. I think I will go to the networking meeting tonight and see if I can't find someone to sell us a copier.

At traditional networking meetings, virtually all of the attendees are there to sell something. Sure, the room is full of people. Sure, it can be enjoyable to talk to lots of people. This creates the buoyant feeling of networking, but inevitably falls short on any meaningful relationship-building. Ask yourself: Does the person you are talking to at a networking meeting have a need for your product; the decision-making power to purchase your product; or the financial ability to purchase your product? The answer to all of these is always "NO."

Networking: An uncontrollable compulsion to offer services to total strangers while ingesting small blocks of cheddar cheese on a five-inch circular foam dish.

Alternative definition for Networking: A business procedure that simulates all the work of actual selling but yields no results.

The Wrong Process

Secondly, traditional networking meetings use a broken process. They use forced lead quotas. Meetings have excessive frequency, such as weekly. The meetings are held in places that are not conducive to doing business. Most importantly, they focus on information-sharing or card-flipping rather than relationship-building. Referrals come from those who know, like and trust us. In order to build knowing, liking, and trusting, we must relationship-build, not information share. Traditional networking has tried to shortcut the relationship-building process and hijacked it.

Actually, there is no such thing as “networking.” A productive network is the RESULT of activities, not the activity itself. That is, a powerful network is the result of relationship-building. Relationship building happens indirectly, not directly. Think of your most meaningful business connections. Where did they come from? Most likely, they came from small, structured group activities which were designed for something completely unrelated to business. Examples might include: church groups, social clubs, charitable organizations, or neighbors. The process was simple, spend time with like-minded people doing something other than “networking” and form a relationship. Later, this relationship proved to be valuable in business. It’s quite simple, relationship first, referral second.

**A network
takes months
to build, not
minutes**

Fastest Way to Obtain Results



Traditional networking meetings are full of salespeople trying to sell other salespeople.

At this point we have bad news and the goods news. The bad news is that relationship-building takes time. It happens over months, not minutes. Traditional networking groups choose to ignore this fact because it is inconvenient. Instead, they work under the illusion that meaningful business relationships can be made and referrals can be gained from card-flipping. All relationships begin with knowing, liking, and trusting each other. A networking meeting does a decent job of knowing, and perhaps liking. However, how can people build trust in an inherently distrustful environment? Remember, virtually everyone attends a networking meeting to sell something. Therefore, two people are conversing, trying to figure out how to pry money from the other. How can trust be formed under these circumstances? The good news, paradoxical as it may sound, is that relationship building produces results with incredible speed. When a long time “buddy” recommends you to someone, the deal is almost always done at the speed of light (or trust) or the deal is yours to lose. Often the giver of this type of lead invests something of himself or herself in the deal. The deal also may be imbedded in the context of favors you have done for one another. This is the un-networking business scenario.

The Wrong Philosophy

Third, and most importantly, traditional networking adheres to the wrong philosophies.

Knowing someone is enough.

Great business relationships come from those who know, like AND trust us. These relationships do not come from those who simply know us or have our business card. Pretending that a transactional introduction can lead to a relationship sale is simply naïve.

Relationship sales require relationships. Relationships are built over time, not from a card flip.

The more the merrier.

Composition of a Typical Networking Meeting (100 people - You Meet 5)



Many networking meetings have over one hundred people in attendance. Here is the typical breakdown:

- Small retailers including professionals like dentists, chiropractors, lawyers (50% of attendees)
- Job hunters, student interns (10%)
- Wanna-be business owners (10%)
- Salespeople (23%)

- Professional trollers. That is, these people appear to be like-minded business owners but they never buy anything. Instead, they hop from networking meeting to networking meeting all-day, every day. (5%)
- Interesting business owners you would like to meet (2%)

Most business owners only need to meet the 5% of the attendees that are like-minded and similarly situated. Ninety-five percent of the audience wants something from the business owner, but has nothing to offer them. They are takers and not givers. There is no mutuality. Bottom line, big group equals big problem.

Great networking can occur in a cafeteria hall.

When most business people think of powerful networking, they imagine the Old Boy Network meeting in a high society club backroom. This image may be outdated today; however, let's look at this model. The Old Boy Network has never and will never go away. It is the way business gets done all over the world: small groups of dynamic, influential people get together and through trusted relationships, help each other get things done. That is, small groups of Good Old Boys and Girls purposefully watch out and take care of each other in business.

However, the Good Old Boys and Girls do not meet in a dingy basement or a cafeteria. This crowd is successful and meets in a setting commensurate with their success. Meeting in an environment conducive to success is a vital component to powerful un-networking. The right meeting place adds to the proper un-networking environment.

Business people enjoy mingling with strangers.

This is definitely false! Most business people would prefer to drive an ice pick through their temple than be forced to mingle. Granted, there are the unfortunate few, who, driven by guilt and compulsion make a feeble attempt at mingling. Most do not. Unstructured mingling is torturous. The right type of un-networking group creates a comfortable environment through setting and process.



An example of an effective “good old boys” un-networking group

Henry Ford, Thomas Alva Edison, and Harvey Firestone

Chapter 2

The Fix – Un-Networking

Networking is a myth and speed networking is an oxymoron. Traditional networking is close to face-to-face advertising which can be extremely annoying. What does anyone want from networking meetings? To develop contacts that matter. However, the current networking process is broken and will never meet our expectations.

Instead, we need to Un-Network. We should focus on relationship-building, not card flipping. We need to stop trying so hard to “network.” It was a dark day when the word network became a verb used by business people. Un-Networking or the act letting a productive network happen as the result of natural relationship building is the foundation of American business. Un-Networking works indirectly. The average person cannot walk up to Donald Trump, shake his hand, and say, “Hi Mr. Trump, my name is John Smith and I want to network with you.”

Traditional Networking doesn’t work because it hijacks the relationship-building process

In order to break yourself of the networking compulsion, you must find the right people, in the right place, with the right process, and adhere to the right philosophy. This new model is called Un-Networking and it contains 11 Essential Elements. They are:

Un-networking



1. Forbid Direct Selling

Relationship-building cannot occur if everyone is overtly or covertly selling. This virtually precludes the building of trust. Without trust, referrals are simply card-flipping. Sure, there are lots of names for follow-up. If someone is bored and needs some work to do, this is fine. However, most businesspeople are looking for meaningful leads, not make-work.

The simplest way to build trust is to be in front of the right people and to stop directly selling. This may seem counter-intuitive. However, businesses selling to other businesses (B2B) tend to be long-term relationship sales. A strong relationship is a pre-requisite to the sale. The best way to sell more of these products is in a cultural environment that forbids direct selling.

Eliminate over-selling and networks can be forged

2. Similarity of interests

People like people who are like them. Business is ecumenical – we are not talking about outward appearances or religion. We are talking about business objectives. The easiest way to build the “like” part of know/like/ trust is to hang around people with similar interests and objectives. At a traditional networking meeting, someone across the table could be very interested in selling a copier; however, you may not be quite as interested. When an un-networking group follows Step #1 above and is not trying to sell each other, the focus can move to mutual interests. This is when trust is built.

Caveat: interests cannot be too similar. In particular, networking with competitors trolling the same room builds an environment of distrust. For relationship building, an environment of complete openness must be fostered. Ideally, this would include a non-disclosure agreement among the group.

3. Like-minded people

A member of the Sierra Club and a member of the National Rifle Association might both have a similarity of interest: politics. However, they would probably have polar views on more than a few issues. In order to create meaningful connections, the group must consist of like-minded people. Trust is most likely to be built with someone that

thinks similarly. This is not to say it is impossible to create trust with people who have opposing viewpoints, it is just less likely. Business is notorious for creating strange bedfellows. However, the right people have to be in the room in order to create a powerful un-networking dynamic. Ideally, membership should be exclusive and invitation-only.

4. *Follows Dunbar's Rule*

Anthropologist Robin Dunbar determined that the human brain only has the capacity to process 150 relationships. This phenomenon is known as Dunbar's Number. This could also be called "The Law of Small Structured Groups." The brain simply cannot process too many human connections. A networking group over fifty, is too large and loses effectiveness.

Think of the meaningful relationships in your life. Where did you meet these people? Was it part of a large group, or was it in a small, structured group? Perhaps you met them in your college class or sorority? Perhaps you met them at church? If you met them at church or a club, you probably met them in a bible study group or a breakout group. You can be around someone for ten years and never develop a relationship if it lacks structure and intimacy. The most effective un-networking groups comply with Dunbar's Rule.

**Follow
Dunbar's
rule and
get results**

Social Butterfly(ing) Not Necessary



5. *Structured process*

Businesspeople don't need to be social butterflies to get relationship-building results. Most businesspeople hate attending networking dinners and wandering around trying to find a conversation to force themselves into. For the non-social-butterfly-type, traditional networking functions can be torture. Most businesspeople go to a couple of these meetings and never go back. The mental toil simply isn't worth any benefits gained. A structured process corrects this problem. A high-quality un-networking event follows a process and repeatable format that eliminates the need for small-talk and social discomfort. Done right, even the shyest businessperson will be able to build connections at this type an event.

**An unstructured
networking
process is like
a Junior High
School – Boys
against one wall,
Girls against
the other and
nobody dancing**

**Relationships
are built
consistently,
over time, not
on a hit-and-
run basis**

6. Delayed gratification

The best un-networkers understand and trust the process of relationship building. A successful relationship building process is based on delayed gratification and a bit of happenstance. There is a direct relationship between the value of a relationship and the time taken to develop it. Million dollar relationships are not built in ten minutes. They take time.

7. Reasonable meeting frequency

Improper meeting frequency can kill an un-networking group. Some networking groups meet every week. Most successful businesspeople would prefer to repeatedly TASER themselves rather than network weekly. They simply do not have the time to meet every week, nor is it necessary. A proper balance between meeting often enough to feel connected but not so often that it turns into a job is the un-networking way. Have meetings too frequently and people won't show up. Have them too infrequently and everyone loses track of each other. The best frequency for powerful un-networking is once every four to six weeks.

8. Consistent

Strong relationships cannot be built without seeing the same people on a regular basis. For instance, if John and I attend the same networking meeting every month for five years but only converse occasionally, a strong relationship cannot be formed. Strong relationships are only formed with reasonable and consistent meeting frequency PLUS consistency of attendees.

9. Proven Process

All great processes are proven and repeatable. Traditional networking feels more like a grade school fire drill than a process. However, when un-networking is done properly, a process is followed. By systematically following that process, a proven and predictable result occurs. For instance, business owners can sit around a table and "bang around" an issue. This unstructured process will yield some interesting discussion. However, if a structured issue discussion process is lead by a facilitator, a much better discussion will occur. Ideally, this process should be provided by the un-networking organization rather than the un-networker inventing their own process.

10. Uses a Positive Scorecard

There is an old saying, “What gets measured gets done.” It’s true. If something gets measured, things will improve. To maximize the value of all participants’ time, a scorecard must be created. Additionally, the score-keeping must be positive, not negative. This means rewarding the results and behaviors wanted, not punishing failure.



Many networking groups have rules stating that attendees must bring a certain number of leads per meeting. The concept is good: Make sure everyone tries to help each other. However, in reality, this becomes a spanking. Punishment ensues if leads are not brought. Many businesspeople have received a call from a friend in this type of group. The call sounds something like:

Hey, I’m sorry; I had to give your name out at my networking meeting because I didn’t have any real leads. Pretend to be a bit interested when Sally calls you because I don’t want to get in trouble for giving them bogus leads.

This is an incredible waste of everyone’s time. Relationships cannot be manufactured. A good system recognizes this and rewards behaviors that lead to connections as well as sales.

For example, a good system would reward an introduction to a quality vendor or meeting someone useful to the business. The system would keep track of what connections lead to positive business results. These results could be quality advice, customers, prospects, vendors, or simply good people to know.

11. In-person

There is no such thing as a Facebook friend or a quality virtual connection. Most things are still bought from people, not computers, images, or video. A high-quality un-networking group meets face-to-face, not virtually. LinkedIn is a great way to share contact lists but a grand total of ZERO relationships have been formed on LinkedIn. People post their existing contacts and relationships on LinkedIn, they do not create them.

If you want to gauge the quality of your virtual “relationships,” email your Facebook friends and tell them you are moving and you could use some help. See how many show up.

There is no such thing as a Facebook friend. Real relationships are made face-to-face

Chapter 3

Are there Un-Networking Groups?

Yes, in response to business owners' desire for a higher-level networking group, Level 7 Un-Network was created. Level 7 combines all eleven of the key elements into a powerful format for B2B businesspeople. Membership is exclusive to top executives and business owners of business-to-business enterprises. Groups meet monthly for lunch at upscale establishments such as Ruth's Chris or Sullivan's Steak House. Meetings are structured around discussion of a business topic rather than card flipping.

Our unique program is based on the following philosophies:

- Relax, un-networking should be fun and stress-free.
- An authentic network is the RESULT of relationships, not the cause.
- You can create an environment where relationship-building will flourish.

- Patience is rewarded with valuable long-term relationships.
- Business owners want to have meaningful conversations with other business owners.
- Eating lunch alone is a waste of time and money.
- Keeping the wrong people out of a group is just as important as having the right people in it.
- Direct selling destroys trust-building and should not be allowed.
- Small, structured groups are the fastest and easiest method to build relationships.

If you are interested in learning more about Level 7 Un-Networking, download our complete membership information package at

www.unnetworking.com/membership

We welcome you to join a meeting as our guest.

Go to <http://www.unnetworking.com/> and click the [Be Our Guest](#) button and complete the form.



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In 1918, the “Four Vagabonds”; Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone and John Burroughs took off on the first of a series of gypsy excursions where they bonded, brainstormed, and debated business issues. The results are the stuff of legends. In this spirit, Level 7 brings together business owners in an atmosphere conducive to producing powerful results - strategic alliances and shared perspectives that can lead your business beyond the next level. You and your business are potential legends waiting to happen.



Jim Muehlhausen is the first person many American CEOs turn to when they need savvy advice on a critical business decisions. Founder and president of CEO Focus, a national franchise organization that builds peer boards for C-level executives, Muehlhausen is known for business ownership acumen, however he is perhaps

better known for his “Mule Kicks” – piercing observations delivered with deft humor that snap the business person into new problem solving realizations. As the author of “The 51 Fatal Business Errors and How to Avoid Them”; founder of The Business Model Institute; and founder of the University of CEO; Muehlhausen is one of America’s leading authorities on building productive high-level business relationships.

Published by Level 7 Un-Networking

There is just no one better than Jim at getting executives on the right path - through the minefields and directly to the opportunities - in today’s business landscape.

*- Andy Cleary author of
“Genius Simple Branding”*

President – Orbit Design

Muehlhausen’s comments on networking touched a nerve. Am I networking because I think I should rather than looking at the actual results. Level 7 is where I belong.

- Ryan Stephens

CEO – Perpetual Technologies