

# Connecting Your Way to New Business



BY ALICE HEIMAN

## Introduction

Do you network effectively? How many networking events do you attend only to leave without having met anyone new? Is that networking? I don't know about you, but the time and money I spend on attending association meetings, trade shows and events needs to turn into revenue and a large percentage of that will come from people I haven't met yet.

*Networking is building relationships that may lead to sales or other needed resources.*

Frequently, I walk into "networking" events and observe the following: people register, walk into the meeting room, find the people they know, chat with them and then listen to the speaker and eat their meal. When the speaker finishes, the raffle prizes are given and people leave. Sound familiar?

Don't kid yourself – a scenario like the one described above is not a networking event. I call it a *meet and eat*. Organizations have these meetings or events monthly or even weekly to get their members together so they get to know each other, conduct the business of the group and hear an informational speaker. They are extremely common and, regardless of how they are advertised, they are typically an ineffective way to network.

# Connecting Your Way to New Business

Conferences and trade shows can be the same way. People gather with those they know. You can't fault them. It's comfortable and no one enables them to do otherwise.

Since most organizations haven't a clue how to structure their meetings and events to maximize the "get to know each other" part, it is important that you take the lead.

*Networking is one of the easiest and most important things you can do to increase sales.*

After years of developing and then teaching networking techniques, I can honestly say that the "get to know each other" part, is the thing that desperately needs work. Many people attend these *meet and eats* for years and never get to know the other members, nor do they build relationships that could lead to referrals and direct business.

This book contains 10 tips that will turn your networking into business.

*Consider implementing the following ideas to turn the events you attend into effective networking events that deliver results.*

# Tip 1: Meet Your Ideal Prospects

## Tip 1: Meet Your Ideal Prospects

**Figure out the best places to meet your ideal prospects.**

Your best prospects are not always where you think they are. For instance, sales and marketing professionals naturally gravitate to professional organizations like the American Marketing Association. However, more business leads might be generated at organizations like the Chamber of Commerce or state or regional economic development meetings. I'm not saying you shouldn't attend for professional development, but it's not going to be the best place to find new business.

*Choose the organizations and events that you attend based on where you are most likely to find your ideal prospects. This may mean experimenting a bit and thinking "outside the box."*

There are many wonderful business owners and service organizations for almost any profession. It is a good idea to attend several that relate to your business or service to keep you up to date on advances in your industry. However, it is just as important that you attend meetings that are not geared toward your profession. For instance, if you are an accountant, try attending the American Marketing Association meetings in your area. If you are a printer, try attending Commercial Real Estate Women – CREW. The people attending are potential clients, referral sources and maybe new friends.

# Tip 1: Meet Your Ideal Prospects

Time is a limited commodity and, if you're like me, there just never seems to be enough of it. That's why I recommend you analyze how much business actually results from your networking efforts. Then, make some decisions on how to make that precious time more valuable. Even if you are attending an organization's meetings for charitable purposes, the relationships you build could result in referrals or direct business.

There is an easy way to determine whether you're getting a good return on your time investment. Here is how to do the analysis:

- Make a list of the networking events you attend on a regular basis.
- Next to each event, list both the business leads and the revenue you can attribute to contacts you made there.

If your analysis indicates you are getting a poor return on your investment, consider this: you need to improve your networking techniques and/or find different networking events to attend.

If you want to attend different organization's meetings, a local newspaper or business journal will be helpful to find listings of



networking events, many lists can be found online. You can also research national organizations on the internet and find local chapters and find out when they meet.

# Tip 1: Meet Your Ideal Prospects

Our clients find people to do business with by attending these types of events. Some of these may be organizations you aren't totally familiar with, so do some research before attending. Look at their website to determine their mission. Check out their list of members. Call someone at the organization to get more information about the meetings, the members and the attendance at the meetings.

**When planning to network, here are a few organizations to consider:**

American Marketing Association (AMA) [www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com)

ASTD [www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)

Chambers of Commerce [www.uschamber.com](http://www.uschamber.com)

Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) [www.crewnetwork.org](http://www.crewnetwork.org)

Economic Development Authorities

eWomen Network

[www.ewomennetwork.com](http://www.ewomennetwork.com)

Human Resource Associations (SHRM) [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)

Institute of Management Consultants (IMC)

[www.imcusa.org](http://www.imcusa.org) Lion's Clubs [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)

National Association of Insurance & Financial Advisors (NAIFA) [www.naifa.org](http://www.naifa.org)

Rotary Clubs [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

Sales 2.0 [www.sales2oconf.com](http://www.sales2oconf.com)

Women in Technology (WITI)

[www.witi.com](http://www.witi.com) Zonta International

[www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)

If you determine that your ideal prospects are members of an organization, plan to attend its meetings and events on a regular basis. Use my techniques and planning process to maximize the return on your investment of time. Remember, you are there to get to know people and develop relationships, not sell.

Finally, most organization events and meetings have registration 30 minutes before the meeting starts. Plan to arrive early and use that time to meet as many people as you can. If you are not comfortable meeting new people then find a member who will introduce you (more about that in Tip 4).

# Tip 2: Set Goals

## Tip 2: Set Goals

### Set goals for each networking event.

In a perfect world, your goal might be something like, “Meet five new business contacts who can make the decision to spend \$200,000 with me in the next six months.” It would be pretty hard to hit that goal, so we have to work on some that are realistic for each event.

*You must set a goal in order to effectively measure your networking success.*

Since different organizations and events attract different people, you need to think about what you want to accomplish before you attend each event. Ask yourself what you would like to come away with and what would be realistic for this group of people at this event. What

would make your investment of time, energy and effort worthwhile? Then, don’t leave without meeting that goal. For instance, if your goal is to meet 10 new people, then don’t leave the event without meeting them. If there is someone specific you want to meet, make sure to meet them before you leave.

If you are going to a new event, in order to set a clear goal, I recommend you start by finding out about the organization, the board members, the mission, who their target members are, who is attending the meeting, how many people will be there, the meeting format and anything else that will help you meet your goal.



## Tip 2: Set Goals

After your research, determine what an appropriate goal would be. Here is an example:

You are an accountant looking for new clients. You would like to work with small insurance firms and financial planners. You decide to attend NAIFA. You research on the website and then call the president. You determine that approximately 60 people will be attending the upcoming lunch meeting. You set a goal to meet 19 people based on the fact that there will be 9 other people at your table to meet and you will get there at 11:30 a.m., so you have plenty of time to meet 10 others before the speaker starts.



While you were on the call with the president, you learned the attire for the event and that will allow you to follow our next tip.



# Tip 3: Dress for Success

## Tip 3: Dress for Success

**Dress for networking success.**

Wear something comfortable that makes you feel like a million bucks. If you look great, you will feel great and be more comfortable meeting new people. Since networking is the main goal, a cool logo shirt with nice slacks or a skirt is appropriate most of the time.

Make sure your attire fits in with the organization's members and the location of the event. Sometimes, a dress or suit may be appropriate. Or, if you are attending a technology event that is very casual, jeans may be okay. If you are not sure, call the event coordinator and ask what the appropriate attire would be. Don't overlook this important detail. Wearing jeans, when everyone else is in a suit, will not help you find potential customers. Likewise, showing up in a suit, when everyone else is in jeans, won't have the required effect either.

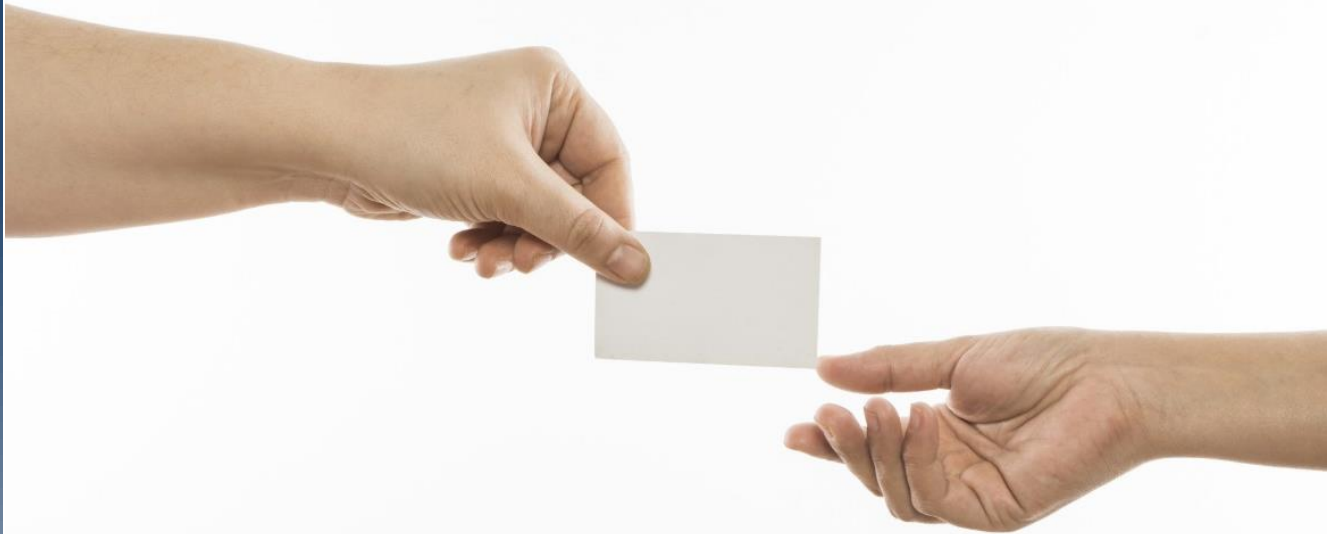


No matter what you wear, be sure it easily accommodates a name tag. Speaking of name tags, don't you hate those sticky name tags that don't stay on? I know I do, so I strongly recommend purchasing company name tags. They look much more professional and contribute to promoting your brand.

## Tip 3: Dress for Success

Custom name badges are available at your local promotions company or online and cost about \$10 or less, so there is no excuse for not having them. Order yourself at least 2 and keep one in your car so you are never without one at an event.

The final dress for success tip is practical, very important and something you may not think about. Be sure that whatever you wear, has easy to reach pockets large enough to hold your business cards and a pen. These items should be easily accessible. I can't tell you how many times I have asked someone for their card, only to watch them dig helplessly in a bag or wallet for what seemed like forever. Most times, the elusive card never appeared. You don't want to waste valuable networking time digging for your card.



First impressions are important, so don't be caught digging fruitlessly for your business card. Have plenty of cards and have them readily available.

## Tip 4: Attend With a Member

### Tip 4: Attend With a Member

Attend events with a member who will introduce you.

This is one of those, “Duh, why didn’t I think of that,” tips. There are two really good times to implement this idea: an event where you are new and don’t know any members, or an event where one of your goals is to meet very specific people.

*“Hi, I will be attending your event for the first time and would like to have someone show me around and introduce me to members. Can you arrange that for me?”*



If you are new, call the president or membership chair of the organization and let them know that you will be attending the event for the first time. Ask them to arrange for a member to meet you at the registration desk and spend time introducing you to the other members. When you meet at registration, get to know each other briefly and share your goals for the event.

## Tip 4: Attend With a Member

When your goal is to meet someone specific at an event, it becomes easier if you ask someone who knows that person, to introduce you. Typically, one of the officers or the membership chair will know the member you want to meet, so don't be shy, ask them to introduce you.

*Some organizations have people at the event specifically for the purpose of greeting new or potential members and showing them around.*

Some organizations have people at the event specifically for the purpose of greeting new or potential members and showing them around. If you haven't made prior arrangements, ask at the door for some help. Let them know this is your first time and that you would like someone to introduce you to members.

Don't be upset if your guide gets pulled away. You will have made some new contacts by then, so go back to them and start a conversation. Ask about their experience in the organization, determine if there are people they feel you should meet and, if so, ask them to introduce you.



# Tip 5: People You Don't Know

## Tip 5: Meet People You Don't Know

If you are attending an event that you frequent, but don't know very many people, make it a point to meet people in the room that you don't know.

Most people I coach on networking are amazed when they realize they go to the same events over and over, find their friends and co-workers and spend all their time with these people. It doesn't occur to them that they can say, "Hi" and keep moving. You can always say, "Great talking to you, but there are a few other people I need to see today. Enjoy the event."

*Get your friends in the act.  
Have a contest to see  
which of you can meet the  
most new people and  
then compete on the follow up  
to see who can turn those new  
relationships into business.*

Remember, your purpose is to talk to the people you haven't met or that you would like to get to know better. If you have friends at the event that can introduce you, include them in the conversation. Otherwise, plan to say a quick hello, then focus on the people you identified earlier, when you set your goals.

## Tip 5: People You Don't Know

For those who feel they need a reason to say “Hi” and move on, bringing a guest is a good excuse to work the room. Be sure to introduce your guest to as many people as possible, without rushing. If you are finding it hard to break away from those you know, you can say something like, “I don’t mean to rush off, but I want to introduce my guest to a few more people before the speaker starts.”

*Sometimes it’s awkward to walk up to people you have seen week after week, yet have never talked to.*

Sometimes it’s awkward to walk up to people you have seen week after week, yet have never talked to. Make this an opportunity to get to know them. You might say, “I just realized, I don’t know what you do,” or “What are the biggest challenges that you are facing in your business now?”





# Tip 6: Business Cards

## Tip 6: Business Cards

**Have plenty of business cards with you.**

Should I have to mention this? The answer is yes. Don't you hate it when you are at a networking event and ask someone for their card and they say, "I didn't bring any," or "I am out." I am always baffled; why would anyone attend a networking event without any business cards? Always have plenty of cards handy. How many cards is enough? The answer really depends on your goals. I personally wouldn't go to an event without at least 30 business cards.

*Bring at least 30 business cards.*

In order to determine the number, think about how many people will be attending, how many you plan to meet and how many people will be at your table if the event is planned around a meal. When you come up with a number, my coaching to you is double it so you are prepared if someone asks you for an extra card to give to a friend.



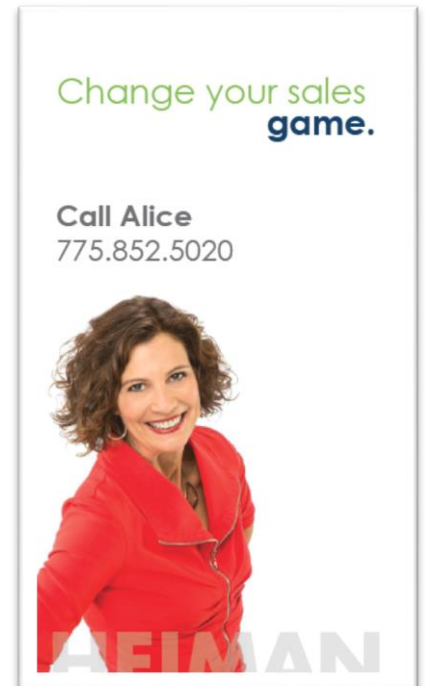
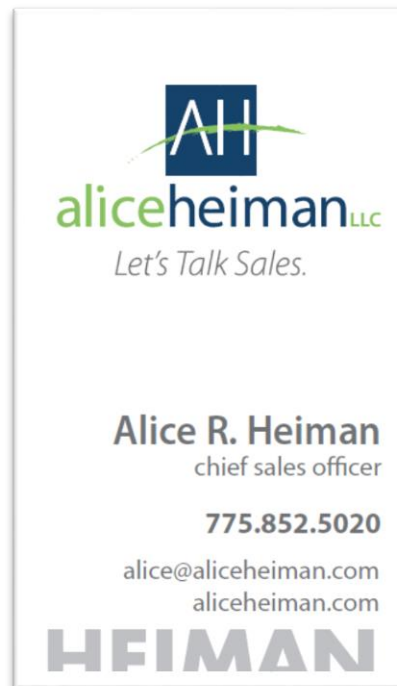
You should always keep extras in your car, briefcase, purse, pockets and anywhere else you can think of. On top of those, have the number of cards you need to meet your goals in your pocket or bag.



## Tip 6: Business Cards

Giving out your cards is the second step, making sure the card you give out does a good job representing you and your company is the first step. Do you have a great business card? Does it help you sell? Does it tell people what you do specifically? Use the back of your business card strategically. Although you want to leave space on the back of your card to jot a note, you may also want to list 3 or 4 of your top products or services.

Not only are you giving away cards, you are, no doubt, collecting them as well. You go to a meeting and come away with a stack of business cards from people you have met.



What typically happens when, about three weeks later, you decide to follow up with these people? You sit at your desk by the phone and sadly realize you don't have a clue who any of the people are, or what you discussed with them. This is why your business card pocket must have room for a pen. If you take the time to write a brief note on each card you collect, follow up becomes a very easy task. For more tips on follow up, see tip 10.

# Tip 7: Ask Questions

## Tip 7: Ask Questions

**When you approach someone, make conversation by asking questions about them and their business.**

Don't pitch your business. Don't even mention your business, unless you are asked. Ask good questions and listen.

If you are shy or just not sure how to start a conversation with a stranger, you can always ask some of the following questions to get you started: "Have you attended these meetings before?"

"I am new to this group. What do you like about belonging?"

"How long have you been a member? What are some of the benefits?"

"Tell me about your business. What do you enjoy most about it?"

"Where are you from? Have you lived here long?"

"Have you heard this speaker before?"

"Hi, it is my first time at this event and I don't know anyone. Would you save me by talking to me?"

Why talk about what we want? That is childish. Absurd. Of course you are interested in what you want. You are eternally interested in it. But no one else is. The rest of us are just like you: we are interested in what we want.

So the only way on earth to influence other people is to talk about what *they* want and show them how to get it.

Dale Carnegie,  
*How to Win Friends  
& Influence People*

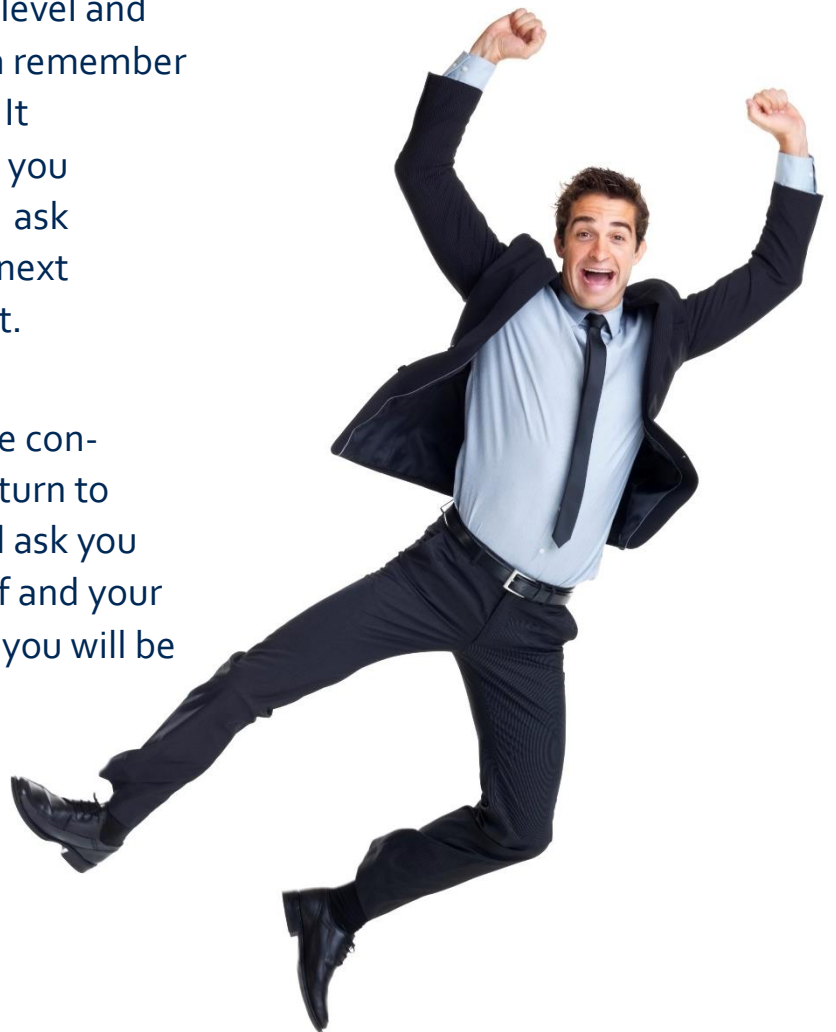
## Tip 7: Ask Questions

The key point here, is to figure out a few questions that will get a conversation started with a stranger. Make sure that the questions work with your personal style and that you feel comfortable asking them.

*"So, what do you do?"*

Get others talking about themselves, their business, their hobbies. It doesn't matter, as long as you get them talking. Once they are talking, look for areas of common interest. Finding a common interest, will help you connect with them on a personal level and will help them remember you, later on. It will also give you something to ask them about next time you meet.

Eventually, the conversation will turn to you. They will ask you about yourself and your business, and you will be ready.



# Tip 8: What Do You Do?

## Tip 8: What Do You Do?

Be prepared with a great answer to, "What do you do?"

One sure way to end a conversation is by answering the question "What do you do?" with, "I'm a realtor" or "I'm a dentist." This leaves the asker looking for something to say other than, "Oh."

When I ask someone what they do, I am looking for insight into who they are and a possible conversation avenue. I want someone to tell me a little more about themselves, other than their name, title and the company they work for.


*An interesting reply to "What do you do?" will lead into an easy conversation. Prepare and rehearse your response so it sounds engaging, not scripted.*

If asked, stating the name of your company and your title is not enough. You need to say something that helps people understand what you do and engages them. Your goal is not to tell them everything about your business or product. Your goal is to get them interested enough to ask you for more information.


## Tip 8: What Do You Do?

Instead of:

Say something like:



"Hi, I am Alice from Alice Heiman, LLC. I am a sales consultant."

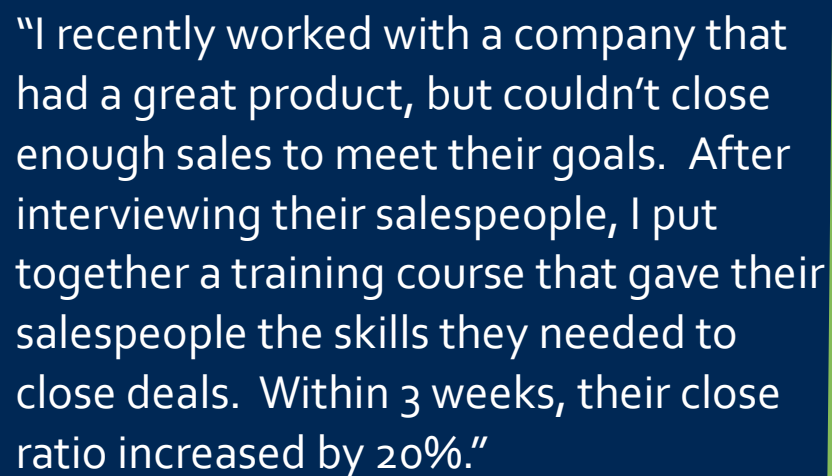


"Hi, I am Alice from Alice Heiman, LLC. I help companies increase sales."

The response will probably be, "Really? How do you do that?"

Once you have been asked, you can explain how you do that or you can show them through a success story.

Here is an example of a short success story:



"I recently worked with a company that had a great product, but couldn't close enough sales to meet their goals. After interviewing their salespeople, I put together a training course that gave their salespeople the skills they needed to close deals. Within 3 weeks, their close ratio increased by 20%."

Prepare and rehearse so that your response doesn't sound scripted, but so that it sounds engaging.

# Tip 9: Ask For the Business You

## Tip 9: Ask For the Business You Want

Ask for the type of business you want and be specific.

At the end of your success story, if you still have a captive audience, be sure to tell them the type of business you are looking for.

*"I enjoy helping small and midsize companies that want to increase their sales and have a budget for sales training. If you know the CEOs of any companies like that, I would love the opportunity to talk with them and learn about what they are trying to accomplish."*

It is tough for people to make referrals, if they don't know what type of business you are looking for. Moreover, they don't naturally think about whom they could refer to you, nor do they automatically know that you need business. You have to tell them. If you are uncomfortable stating the kinds of customers you are looking for, consider asking them what kinds of customers they are looking for first. If they are not specific, prompt them by asking questions. Once they answer, you may want to make a note on the back of their business card so you remember what type of business to refer to them.

## Tip 9: Ask For the Business You Want

When asked, if they start naming companies that can use your help, be prepared to write them down and ask for a direct introduction in person, by phone or email. If not, let them know that you will get back to them, at a later date, to see if they have run across any.

As you are setting your goals and preparing for the event, take time to develop the words you will use to state the type of business you are looking for, based on your audience.





## Tip 10: Follow Up

Follow up within 3 days, to get the best results from your networking efforts.

After the event, immediately enter the business cards you collected into your database. Be sure to add any notes you made on the cards during the event. I always add the name of the event and the date, so I can remember where I met them. If I send an email or a card, I make a note of that also.

If you use social media, you may want to connect with them that way as well. Go to LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or any others that you use, to look them up. If they are there, write them a personal note telling them where you met and asking them to connect.

If you say, "Let's get together for coffee or lunch," then make it happen. It shouldn't be something you say just to make conversation. Call or email after the event to set it up. Be sure to send a "nice to meet you note" by mail or e-mail and anything else you promised to send within two business days. Spend time developing a relationship.

*Networking  
is useless  
if you don't  
do any  
follow up.*

## Tip 10: Follow Up

When you connect, if they are not a potential customer, ask them to introduce you to those they know, who may be and refer people to them that may be their potential clients. If they are a potential customer, learn as much as you can about their business and possible ways you might help them.

Figure out a way to keep in contact on a regular basis. Watch the media, for the people you are interested in. If you see an article about them, clip it and send it to them with a note about doing business together. If you read an article that would interest them, send it.



Whatever you do, don't let business cards collect dust on your desk. Go through them immediately after the event. If you don't enter them in your database, throw them out. Yes, it is okay to throw out a business card. What I usually do, is band all the cards from a specific event together with a note on them, that includes the name of the event and the date. If I haven't touched them in a month or two, I toss them.

## Conclusion

Everyone can learn to network. Salespeople and entrepreneurs, need to become experts at it. Try to get everyone in your company to network. A great way to get started is to have the salespeople bring an employee with them to every networking event they attend.

Be sure you have a networking strategy. Choose carefully the events you attend and follow these 10 tips, to turn all the time, money and effort spent at networking events into business.

*Connecting Your Way to New Business* is also a training program available for your team. Check out [www.aliceheiman.com](http://www.aliceheiman.com) for more ways to improve your sales and networking results.

1. Figure out the best places to meet your ideal prospects.
2. Set goals for each networking event.
3. Dress for success.
4. Attend new events with a member who will introduce you.
5. Make it a point to meet the people in the room you don't know.
6. Have plenty of business cards with you.
7. Make conversation by asking questions about their business.
8. Be prepared with a great answer to, "What do you do?"
9. Be sure to ask for the type of business you want.
10. Follow up to get results from your networking events.

# About Alice R. Heiman

## Sales Trainer, Coach, Speaker



As a sales expert, Alice Heiman has been helping companies increase sales since establishing Alice Heiman, LLC in 1997. Alice is a natural when it comes to networking, which is one of the easiest and most effective ways she's found for salespeople, entrepreneurs, consultants and small businesses to increase sales.

She not only trains people on how and where to effectively network, she also developed and trademarked a unique networking program called the BizTalk Blender®, which she facilitates for many professional organizations.

For the past 20 years, Alice has presented her sales ideas to salespeople and sales management throughout the country. Alice began developing her sales expertise at Miller Heiman, Inc., where she was responsible for training, coaching, and program quality.

She was named 2004 Saleswoman of the Year by the Professional Saleswomen of Nevada, Marketer of the Year by the American Marketing Association and has been featured in Selling Power Magazine.

***Check our schedule of upcoming events at [aliceheiman.com/events](http://aliceheiman.com/events)***



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