

Sales Coach Series

First published in Infomatics

Networking for business

First published on 01/07/2000

The Dilemma

My sales team lack creativity in finding new prospects. How can I introduce them to business networking?

The Coaching

Networking is one of the most effective means of developing new contacts largely because it works from a premise of seeking mutual benefit.

Where to network?

Everywhere and anywhere but it's not an opportunity for a sales pitch!

- One of the most powerful routes is to gain referrals through networking with business partners, customers, resellers and manufacturers
- Customers also like to network with their peers so organising focus groups or seminars which facilitate the flow of information and discussion about a particular market sector or technology, without blatant product promotion, can be ideal for all parties.
- Professional Institutes and trade associations have a long-established tradition for networking. Some may be industry specific, others focus on profession, for instance the Institute of Management, so it's important to identify your target market carefully and the opportunities for meeting.
- Exhibitions and conferences also provide opportunities - as many will have found at the Networks / CT show.
- Finally, of course, plenty of networking happens at the gym, on the golf course etc

How to network?

- Be confident
- Be genuinely interested in others - remember to ask an open question to get the conversation started!
- Be ready to explain who you are and what you do clearly and concisely without reverting to a sales pitch
- Carry plenty of business cards
- Circulate - don't be afraid to move on
- Remember it's a two-way, 'win-win' thing
- And most important of all - don't act like a salesperson!