

Non-Toxic Networking:

From Poisonous to Popular

Sneak Peek Edition



*more clients!
more customers!
more friends!*

by Jennifer Gniadecki

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Networking

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The Networking Buddy™

I wrote *Non-toxic Networking: From Poisonous to Popular* because I keep watching people network badly. People are very, very ineffective at networking in most cases. I want to help each individual person but if I were to walk up to someone in a networking event and say, "Oh, hey, you suck at this...let me help you!" That wouldn't make me any new friends. Heck, it could get me smacked.

I don't want to offend people or make them feel inadequate. We are all wonderful and unique, but if I say that to someone after saying they need help with their networking technique, it doesn't ring as being sincere. They think I'm just saying they can be great...they think I'm just humoring them.

After trying to help people one-on-one in a direct manner and having people think I was either insulting them or leaving the event with less self-esteem than they came in with, I decided that writing a book would be the most effective way to get the message out and help others make networking a more meaningful experience. Not just meaningful for the networker, but more meaningful for the people that networker comes into contact with every day.

Networking will always be the best way to get a job, a client, or a customer. In times of a shaky economy, networking may be the only way you will find a job that pays enough to cover your bills - and it might be the only way to find customers and clients to keep your business afloat when people don't have as much disposable income.

Your job as the networker is to find out what all the unspoken rules are of each group. Even if you're just out having a drink with your friends it is an opportunity to network, just make sure your friends are okay with you being "on" for your business when you're supposed to be out for social purposes only.

You always need to be networking.

Your network is a valuable, special, living thing - with human beings at the other end of every phone call and every e-mail. Each one has a completely unique set of trials and tribulations they have gone through. While those experiences may help you in the future, those people may need your support in some way right now.

There is great responsibility in effective networking. People will feel connected to you, care about you, and want to know more about you. Don't be shy, but don't share the farm. Find a balance so you can further the relationships with people you would like to be friends with, and find a way to make those healthy boundaries with people you don't want to be that close to.

I hope that you find this special edition of *Non-toxic Networking* useful and are able to take the information in it to elevate your networking skills so that your networking is ultimately non-toxic to you, your business and your networking colleagues.

Success, both business and personal, can be skyrocketed using networking in an effective, focused way. So it doesn't really matter if you're looking for a client or for a date - the tips in *Non-toxic Networking* will get you

where you want to be a lot faster than whatever you're doing now that may not be working so well.

Even if you consider yourself a "seasoned networker," *Non-toxic Networking* is for you. The way networking used to work doesn't work anymore. There has been a paradigm shift, and it is no longer about who talks the fastest or has the best elevator speech. What people want is a throwback to the old general store - where they walk in and know who you are, ask about the kids, have a few moments of connecting before getting down to business. *Non-toxic Networking* shows you how to determine what you have to give and how to give it to others while retaining your dignity.

What Kind of Book is This?

Non-Toxic Networking: From Poisonous to Popular (both the special edition and the full-length book) is part self-help, part business information and no fluff. I'm not a big fan of the self-help book genre, and I did not intentionally write the book to have any kind of self-help element. It happened because the undeniable truth is if you don't have yourself straight internally you are not going to make solid connections externally at an event. You'll share too much. Or someone will cross your boundaries and you won't know how to react. However it ends, it will end badly. **So we do a little self-analysis - but only insofar as it will help you succeed** out there. There is even more networking related self-analysis in the full-length book.

Non-toxic Networking will benefit:

- *Business owners*
- *Not for profits*
- *Executives and corporate ladder climbers including C-level professionals*
- *Independent Contractors*
- *Freelancers*
- *Mothers & Fathers*
- *Job seekers*
- *Anyone else that needs to make personal or business connections*

I'm a business owner. As such, you'll see that *Non-toxic Networking* is written from the perspective of a business owner. That does not mean it won't help you if you are not a business owner. Your life is your business, and the pieces of your life (your career, your hobbies) are part of that and need to be given attention so those parts of your life can constantly improve. With *Non-Toxic Networking*, you will find a new way to succeed, a new way to make connections, and a new way of thinking. A new way that brings you more in all aspects of your life.

No matter what your career path or business status, learning the background of networking as well as why networking works will have a positive impact on your life. **Networking will bring you more friends, more connections, and more opportunities** - if that's not success, I don't know what is!

CHAPTER 1

Networking 101: Defining Networking

A Definition of Networking

Dictionary.com defines networking as “A supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest.”

It’s no accident they don’t specify business. **Networking is any group of people with any common interest coming together and sharing information and services.**

This means it is more than likely you are already networking and don’t even realize it! If you are part of a book club, knitting circle, fantasy football league, or a group of dog enthusiasts you have a network.

Networking is, in its simplest form, having people you can call on. Did you make a new friend recently? They are part of your personal network. Did you meet someone that might know a great place where you can get a new job? They are part of your professional network.

If you need help determining who your professional network is versus your personal network, think about who knows the most about your personal life. Your personal network is the one that knows about your love life, your professional network knows about the last big client you got.

If you only see someone at networking events, they are probably part of your professional network. If you’re having a bad day because your dog got hit by a car, you

are going to call someone from your personal network. If you haven't transitioned someone from your professional network to your personal network, don't lay anything heavy on them (in an emotional sense) - they may feel put upon or uncomfortable being transitioned over to your personal network in this manner.

The bottom line is **people do business with people they like**. If you're not taking the time to get to know people and make connections with them, how will they know if they like you? Once someone knows who you are, they can pair you up with available business opportunities, parties, dates, or other people they think you will get along with. Once you start seeing this happen, you'll think it's magic, but really it's just the power of being a person that takes the time to get to know others.

Some people are nervous about going to networking events because they feel that everyone is there trying to get something from them or is going to try to sell them something. Of course they are, you want something too, don't you? Be understanding of others who network as well as those who don't or don't realize they are networking. Not everyone has *Non-toxic Networking*. And without it, they are not going to have the same techniques you will for being a hit. Everyone is at different levels when networking; and respecting those levels will only help you in the long run.

Sure we all want more clients, more customers, more money, more success - but **what will make you stand out as a networking star is how you network**. When you network properly and effectively you will be more memorable, you will be perceived as more giving, and

that will make people want to give you more than they normally would.

Don't worry about everyone else's intentions. Worry about your own, because that is what will set you apart and make you an effective networker.

Why Network?

The number one reason to network is that you will not be successful unless you network-*period*.

Keeping your name on the tips of tongues and in the front of people's minds is how you become referred by others. They know you have been there for them and they want to do the same for you. By helping others solve business related problems you will be referred for your own services as well as for your contact list.

Why Networking Works

People love to talk. They especially love to talk about things they know well or have a passion for. **Knowing what people want to talk about will set you apart from other networkers.** Asking the questions that let people show you how much they know, how amazing they are, or what they are passionate about will make you the belle (or beau) of the networking ball. Everyone will want to talk to you, because they know you really want to listen.

The Importance of Intention

Now everyone focuses heavily on actions and techniques and scripts and no one ever talks about the underlying intentions of networking (or sales, or marketing, or almost anything else.) This mindset creates a high-pres-

sure, high-focus situation, and concentrates solely on what you do and the results you get. It turns networking into the dreaded Numbers Game where you're doing the math and cold calling and pressuring people into signing up or buying.

I am here to tell you there is a better, easier way.

You don't want to be the person people shy away from. **You don't want people to see you and walk the other way or cringe and look uncomfortable when they think about meeting with you.** Understanding a little about how people think and feel, as well as having positive intentions behind your desire to make a connection is what will keep you from turning into a networking pariah.

Stop pushing people toward a sale with the hard sell, and go to networking events with the intention of making friends and sharing information. You will have much better results when you are well aware of your intentions.

You need to have positive, caring intentions when you use the techniques in *Non-toxic Networking*, or you will come off as cheesy and sleazy...and no one wants that. **You have to care about other people on a basic level for anything in this book to work.**

If you go into any networking event just to sell like a madman (or madwoman) and don't really want to get to know anyone it will show. If you're all about you, it will shine through like a light in the dark, and you'll be left wondering why *Non-toxic Networking* works so well for

other people and not for you.

Sometimes explaining or observing human nature and how people react to situations sounds a little sleazy. It sounds like manipulation. But if you are honestly out to help others, and you do it properly by getting to know who they are and what they do, that is exactly what people will see.

Knowing the outcome of your networking interaction before it happens makes you a wise and astute networker, not a sleazebag.

CHAPTER 3

Make the Magic Happen: The Networking Buddy™

The Networking Buddy™

While you are still in the phase of being scared or uncomfortable, your first order of business is to find just one person you can go to events with so you are not all alone.

You can find this person at a networking event by asking what other groups they go to and asking if you can tag along next time. If you're scared of going to your very first event call up a friend and ask them to come with you. Either way you're going to feel more comfortable knowing you have someone going with you. You'll already know someone, and that means you have an excuse if you're talking to someone you don't want to be, or someone to talk to in between networking with other people, so you never find yourself standing against the wall feeling uncomfortable and looking like a deer in the headlights.

My preference would be to see you hook up with someone at a networking event and go with them to the next event. By "go with" I don't mean drive together. Meet them there. That way when you walk in you'll be looking around for someone you know, and that will ease your entrance transition. You have someone to meet and you look like you have a purpose when you walk in the front door.

The Networking Buddy™ is also fantastic because this is how you find networking groups you couldn't find on your own. Every person has their own set of groups and

people they tend to hang out with. Introducing yourself into one of these groups is a way to go into new situations as someone who is already known. You never again have to walk in and wonder who you should talk to first. Start with your Networking Buddy™ and ask them who you should talk to next.

Then when you find that person you can start with, “Oh, so-and-so told me I should talk to you because you’re amazing at _____” You have a reference name and a compliment. That is powerful stuff, and the person you’ve just walked up to is going to want to talk to you.

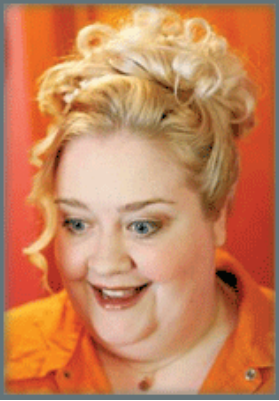
Remember, you’re not the only one who likes to go into a networking event already knowing someone. Even the most seasoned networkers like to know they will know someone at the event before they go. It is human nature to not want to venture into a group alone. It makes everyone feel more comfortable more quickly, so don’t worry about being a third wheel, you are helping them as much as they are helping you.

Just make sure you don’t attach yourself to your Networking Buddy™ like glue and never leave their side. They are a mental security blanket, not a physical one. They exist to make you feel better about being there. They do not exist to stand right next to you all night. You can also cross refer to your Networking Buddy™ by letting people know what they do while you’re networking. “I came to the event with Yamisi; she is an amazing Virtual Assistant, have you had a chance to talk to her yet?”

Talk to your Networking Buddy™ before the event if pos-

sible to see if they want to cross-refer with you as well. The worst that can happen is they only want to promote their business. The best that can happen is they will think you are a genius for thinking of how to work the room twice as fast, and twice as effectively, because a referral is always more effective than an advertisement.

A note for the guys: If you can get a Networking Buddy™ that is a woman (who is not your significant other) that will go a long way. It will show to others in the group you can have professional relationships outside of your own gender. It isn't necessary, but every little bit helps, especially if you are trying to market toward women. Having a woman cross-promote with you at an event will be taken much more easily than you talking to women who are wondering if you are hitting on them or trying to sell you something. If you think that is happening, a female Networking Buddy™ may be just what you need.



About the Author

Jennifer Gniadecki is a big fan of effective networking. She has been networking her whole life (as all of you have!) As the owner of Marketing Curve, Jennifer consults with companies on how to network more effectively as well as on how to create an Internet presence and personality. As the author of the Beyond Mom blog, Jennifer shares business and networking insights in a personal, approachable manner, allowing her to let people get to know her better online. From blogging at <http://beyond-mom.com> to social networking, you'll find Jennifer most at home building online relationships between companies and consumers.

A firm believer in simplicity, you won't find her throwing around buzzwords and jargon - Jennifer believes the true power of communication is when the person you're talking to truly understand what you mean. From buying a car to landing a date, she believes that networking is responsible for some of the best things life has to offer. Once you understand how to network effectively, you'll see the world in a different light.

In between reading business books and trashy crime novels, her favorite hobby is networking. Getting to know other people is a fascination that allows her to have a social life in spite of having a family to tend to. Jennifer attended DePaul University, and currently resides just south of Chicago, Illinois.