

SUCCESS

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF NETWORKING



By
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Do you dread the thought of networking? Do you struggle with building a network?

Do you think networking is not for you? Do you resist networking? Or are you one of those women who cannot wait for the next networking event/opportunity?

As a very shy child growing up in Brazil, I was fascinated by the ability my mother had and still has to go everywhere and make friends. I vividly remember, when people used to go to the bank, my mother taking me to the bank with her. Everyone knew her in that branch—from the security guard to the manager. It was mesmerizing watching her networking like a pro and captivating people with her authentic, caring, positive, and generous nature. My mother's influence encouraged me to make a decision that has changed my life forever. I would no longer be a shy person. Actually, what I had decided back then, when I was thirteen years old, was that I would not let people know I was shy, so I forced myself to talk and interact with everyone around me. I could not tolerate being silent. Now I know that listening and asking the right questions can be more powerful than speaking, and unknowingly, I started my networking journey.

Effective networking is a powerful tool to fulfill your dreams

Fast-forward a decade or so later, I found myself living in Maryland. I had to reinvent myself personally and professionally. I had to learn to navigate a whole new system, adapt to new cultural norms, speak a new language, make new friends and find my place in this new universe. My networking skills have certainly served me very well. They have helped me to find jobs, get accepted in a residency program, find a mentor, serve in over 50 committees, get patients/clients, participate in

collaborative projects, be invited to speak at conferences, meet incredible people, and be a connector (as I am writing this article, I took a short break to send an introductory email to connect two women in my network).

The value of relationships is at the heart of networking

Networking starts with taking a genuine interest in people and establishing a mutually beneficial relationship. It is about asserting yourself as a trusted source of valuable information and being intentional about giving before receiving. Approach networking with the intent of bringing value to the other person and committing to nurture the relationship. People will appreciate their relationship with you when it is clear to them that you are willing to invest time and energy to get to know them. You must persuasively convey the benefit of being associated with you. Having the right network can scale your business, create new career opportunities, and expand your reach and circle of influence.

Effective networking means building strong relationships

HOW CAN YOU UNLOCK THE POWER OF NETWORKING?

One of the most common challenges I hear from women I coach is that they do not enjoy networking because of the fear of rejection, the feeling of bothering people, and the concern of coming across as an unauthentic person. When I help them to change their mindset regarding networking, the magic happens. They become more confident in approaching strangers and appreciate the opportunity of meeting new people and the endless possibilities that come with embracing this process. So

how can you unlock the power of networking?

Get on the Right Mindset

At this point, I believe we are in agreement that networking is a necessity. There is no way out for a woman who is serious about making it big in this fast-paced, highly connected, ever-changing world. So, you must get in the game with the right mindset to make the best out of your networking experiences. Boost your confidence by making an inventory of the main benefits you can bring to this new connection. Focus on your accomplishments, skills, and talents to put yourself in the realm of positivity. Be attentive to your professional image and have a clear idea of the message you are aiming to convey. And don't forget to turn off negative self-talk.

Enjoy the Process

Networking is not optional, therefore, after getting yourself into the right mindset, enjoy the process of connecting with people. Obviously, as everything else in life, no human activity has a one hundred percent no disappointment guarantee seal. Expect to fail, be prepared for rejection, anticipate setbacks, but at the end of the day focus on the lessons learned and ask yourself how you can do better next time. Sometimes, even though you may have done everything right, people may not be willing to connect. Regardless, enjoy the process and stop worrying about the outcome. There will always be other opportunities waiting for you.

Have a Specific Goal in Mind

People will engage in networking for so many different reasons and having a specific goal in mind will help you develop the right networking strategy. Are you networking to get more clients for your business, get more patients for your practice, increase your skills, knowledge, and abilities or build a referral network? No matter what your specific goal is, the bottom line is that your ultimate goal is to cultivate strong relationships and build robust networks.

Develop a Networking Strategy

Create an effective networking strategy by pinpointing why you want to network, identifying the people you need to network with, focusing on relationship building, drafting your elevator pitch, reviewing your networking plan, recognizing that networking is an investment, expressing gratitude towards your new connections, and continuing to reconnect with people in your network.

Have an Impressive Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a quick synopsis that offers people a reason why they should connect with you. Create an elevator pitch that introduces you in a very compelling way. It should be brief (30 seconds), positive, persuasive, and relevant. It should include who you are, what you do or offer, why it matters, what problem you solve, and how

you are different. Once your pitch is done, engage the other person with a question that will be beneficial for her and let her know how to contact you to learn more about you, your company/practice, and your services/products.

Connect Online

In the digital era you cannot ignore one of the best ways to make connections—online networking. Unlike traditional networking, online networking greatly involves using digital tools to build relationships and you need to master those tools to effectively increase your network. Social media is essential for online networking, however, you need to be intentional about which platform you use to achieve your specific goals. Also, you can attend virtual networking events. No matter which digital tool you use, you must become comfortable in the digital world and strengthen your digital presence to remain professionally current and relevant.

Nurture the Relationship

It is not about simply contacting people. You must nurture mutually beneficial relationships within your network. It takes time, interest, effort, and commitment to build and maintain a robust network. Some ways of nurturing your network are: map your existing network, use social media to stay in touch, be helpful, get their opinion, make introductions, and share valuable information. Nurturing your network is an incredible asset you can have.

Networking is about establishing and nurturing long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with the people you meet. It can help you improve your communication skills, meet prospective patients/clients, stay updated on the latest trends in your field, and gain access to the necessary resources that will foster your professional success. Enjoy the process and clearly demonstrate how you can bring value to people. You have so much to offer to the world!

About the author:

Dr. Isabel Rambob is the founder of Rambob Training services, LLC, a company that provides people skills training and coaching for dentists and dental teams. She is also a dentist, professor, certified mediator, and prolific speaker who has lectured in the USA, Europe, Asia, and South America. A fervent knowledge seeker and connector extraordinaire, Dr. Rambob believes in the power of connecting people and ideas to create endless possibilities. Dr. Rambob is very enthusiastic about trying new things and will not hesitate to embark on new adventures whether it is traveling, learning something new, or exploring different cuisines. She is always on the go, but also mindful of the need of slowing down, recharging, and reassessing the priorities in her life.

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