

PROTOCOLS FOR NETWORKING

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Everyone knows that networking is a critical activity in order to expand one's sphere of influence and plane of opportunity. How one goes about networking, however, can result in either significant success or abject failure.

Networking, like any interpersonal relationship, requires that a person have a high "emotional quotient" to be successful. We all now know that an "emotional quotient" (EQ), unlike an "intelligence quotient" (IQ), measures the capacity of an individual to read the emotional state of another. The IQ measures basic intelligence. Leaders with average IQs but high EQs are significantly more successful than those with high IQs but low EQs.

What are the components that are measured in an "emotional quotient"? One measure is the degree of empathy an individual holds. Empathy is the capacity to understand the perspective of another individual and to respect the position that individual holds based upon his or her experiences; e.g., "walk a mile in his shoes".

An EQ is also a measure of an individual's capacity to read nonverbal behavior. Nonverbal behavior is reflected in an individual's physical positioning or movements. For example, if individuals have their arms and legs crossed as they are sitting, that nonverbal behavior could mean that they are closed to new information; i.e., they are very guarded.

Another measure of EQ is being able to detect hidden meaning in verbal behavior. For example, recognizing the difference between sarcasm and teasing; passive aggressive language versus a true compliment. For example, when an individual says "I know you could do better if you had the proper resources", they are really saying "You are not living up to my expectations".

Yet another measure of EQ is being able to read eye movements. For example, eyes darting back and forth generally means that the individual is rapidly trying to fabricate a story to protect himself or satisfy you, or, in other words, lying. Not making eye contact might be interpreted as insecurity, or that the person does not believe that their product will deliver what it purports to deliver.

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A further measure of EQ is the capacity to read differences in receptivity or learning styles of various individuals based upon gender, race, creed, education, age, or general life experiences. For example, in Japan, it is not culturally acceptable to have a hard sell at the first encounter; rather, one exchanges business cards and even a small gift. It is the responsibility of the potential customer to contact you to make a sale, otherwise you would be perceived as being too pushy or arrogant. In India there is significant value given to enabling an individual to "save face". Under such circumstances, if you have a product that is of greater value than a product produced in India, you would not state that outright, but rather merely describe the qualities of the product you are presenting. You would only address the "inferior" product if it is brought to your attention by saying, "Under certain circumstances the product has significant value, however, my product might have some additional unique qualities that you would find intriguing and useful."

An additional measure of EQ is understanding proper timing and place for exchanging information. If one has a good understanding of time and place, he or she would not be placing his or her business card in the collection plate at church, nor to fellow congregants as they "meet and greet" before and after services. Timing is everything.

Finally, a most important measure of EQ is knowing what Yogi Berra knew all along ... "Showing up is 50% of winning". Be a joiner - attend Chamber meetings; be a volunteer on Boards and Committees of charitable organizations; attend charitable fundraisers. By such activities you will be perceived as a people person; a person who cares about others; a person who others will want to get to know.

So you can see from the above examples, an "emotional quotient" of the highest order will garner greater growth of personal resources for individuals than if an individual has a lower "emotional quotient". Some individuals believe that EQ is even more important than IQ, however, they may not be mutually exclusive.

Where does all this discussion about EQ leave us?

At the Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce we are very much committed to ensuring the growth of the businesses of our membership, and we do this through significant opportunities for networking, through meetings and seminars offered by the Chamber. In order for each member of the Chamber to be most successful in networking, we believe each of us must raise our EQs. To this end, we offer the following protocol that we hope will be useful. You can call it "The Ten Commandments of Networking".

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1. Before networking with an individual, try your best to profile the individual and understand the different motivations of the individual based upon age, race, creed, religion, general culture, and business interests.
2. Choose the proper time and place to promote your interests. For example, networking meetings are meant for that purpose, however, a seminar or membership meeting is not specifically designed for networking, and some attendees may not welcome your overtures.
3. Read the nonverbal behavior of the individual you are attempting to network with. If he or she seems otherwise distracted, move on to someone else until you encounter an individual who presents an open and receptive attitude to your overture.
4. Do not try to close a deal on your first meeting with an individual. Rather, get to know the individual first and, with patience, you will have a greater potential for success with that individual.
5. Never be confrontational in your overture such as, "I called your office 5 times; why don't you ever return my calls?". Rather, state that "Is there some way or some best time that I might connect up with you to share some thoughts on how I can make your life/business easier?".
6. Always respect the privacy of individuals that you network with. Do not tell "stories out of school", i.e., gossip. Also, respect the personal space of the individual you are networking with. Do not be "in their face" nor overly "touchy feely", and modulate your voice volume. Remember, speaking louder does not get your point across any better.
7. Make certain that your appearance and personal hygiene is of the highest order. No one wants to network with an individual who has bad breath and is wearing a sloppy sweat suit. So hold the garlic for your nighttime snack, and sweat suits for the gym.
8. Never exaggerate your qualifications or the qualities of your product. A reputation is hard to establish and easily tainted.
9. Follow-up once you have finally connected with an individual and he or she shows an interest in what you are promoting. It is critical that you follow-up to close the deal.
10. Look and listen more than talk. That's why God gave you two ears and two eyes and only one mouth.

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Good luck with your personal and professional networking. It is the cement of success in our day to day living.

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