

Not So Different After All: Social Online and Face-to-Face Networking



If you've been feeling that social media networking is invasive or a waste of time, you're not alone. The ability to reach many people inexpensively has become popular especially with small business owners, some of them brand new entrepreneurs. With so many people trying to navigate this technology, there are a lot of missteps and misconceptions, but much of it has to do with the underlying mindset going into it.

Where is this mindset coming from? We've rapidly moved into the Information Age, yet many entrepreneurs are stuck in Industrial Age mindsets and processes and using them with the new technology. In the Industrial Age, information exchange was one sided, often giving rise to push marketing where information was marketer initiated and controlled, often "pushing" the message to the marketplace. Many entrepreneurs use this push marketing and push networking on social media often with limited results.

If you've been on the receiving end of the push, you might have a jaded sense of the social online networking scene. There is one fundamental problem with having a mindset that looks negatively at social media networking. Your actions will always follow your mindset. If you look negatively at it, you'll find it. Unfortunately, you'll be the one losing out on opportunities to grow your relationships and your business. A bit of forgiveness to those who tried (and continue to try) outdated techniques on you to buy their product and a quick shift of your mindset can put your goals to grow your business and your relationships on the fast track.

Rather than looking at the differences between face-to-face and online networking, use some of the tried-and-true relationship-building techniques that have been successful:

Extend your hand. Inviting someone to connect with you online is like extending your hand to someone you just met in person. On one occasion, I extended my hand inviting someone to my network who also had many of the same connections. But instead of accepting it, I received a return note indicating that he didn't connect with anyone he didn't know personally. No problem. I simply explained that I use the social networks as a way of getting to know others and expanding my network. Weeks later, he revisited his personal mindset and policy and connected with me. He later revealed that his mindset was the result of something he learned very early on when social online networks were first coming on scene. Armed with a new perspective, he grew his network exponentially within a matter of weeks and thanked me for sharing with him my process for social online networking. So the next time someone



you don't know says hello by connecting with you, rethink your mindset. Are you pulling your hand away or extending your hand of friendship in return?

Get to know them. After you've connected with someone in person, what's the next question you would ask? Maybe it's "what do you do for a living?" It's really no different with social online networking. If you've already read their profile, perhaps you can then ask, "Who is your ideal client?" I often ask the latter question to those I've just met both in person and online. It's a good open-ended question to get to know more about them and their business. Much like developing any strong relationship, it is not about what you're going to receive, rather how you can help the other person. Perhaps you can even suggest someone they can connect with online that would make a good referral partner.

Nurture the relationship. Did you read a good article online or stumble upon a new resource that would be of interest to the new person you've just connected with on a social online network? Send it to them! Let them know you appreciated meeting them and how this new resource may help them.

With the right mindset, you can leverage social media networking to grow your relationships and your business. When you shift your mindset, develop a clear strategy and implement congruent processes and systems, you'll expand your relationships, grow your business, and develop a solid network of colleagues, friends and followers.

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