



## Networking Groups can Produce Outstanding Sales Results

One of the absolute best things a small business owner can do is to join a Network Marketing Group. I am convinced that active participation in a group can have a significant impact on sales, profitability, and attitude.

For some small businesses, participation can mean the difference between business failure and success. I have seen it happen here in York County.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL GROUPS

**First, they meet weekly.** Unlike other community, civic, or business organizations that meet monthly, networking groups need regular, sustained participation.

**Secondly, their primary purpose is to generate qualified referrals** for the members. Successful groups tend not to diffuse their focus by involvement in otherwise worthwhile community, social, or political activities.

**Attendance is strictly enforced.** A successful group will remove one of its members for chronic non-attendance. You can't play if you're not at the game.

**Only one member from each business type may join.** In other words, only one Accountant may join the group. Other accountants are welcome to visit, but would be prohibited from joining. The same would be true for real estate agents, carpet cleaners, bankers, and so on.

**So who joins these groups?** Membership varies with each group, of course, but here's a selection of what businesses to expect. An attorney, accountant, banker, real estate agent, property and casualty insurance, life insurance, photographer, hairdresser, computer specialists, landscapers, carpet cleaners, home cleaners, non-medical inhome care providers, website hosts and developers, payroll service providers, and many, many others.

Can you tell what they all have in common? They're all in business for themselves, their businesses are relatively small, and they all realize that they benefit from a multiplier effect if they can get a sales force working effectively for them.

Here's the entire idea in a nutshell. We all know people who need certain goods or services, but don't know who to talk to. When someone asks me about the services of one of the members in my group, I simply say, "Why, I know just the person. In fact, I have breakfast every Thursday morning with them. I'll have them give you a call."

It's a wonderful feeling when you can put together two friends like that.

And it's an equally wonderful feeling when you're on the receiving end. You're well on your way to making a sale or acquiring a client that you probably would have never been able to do otherwise.

### EACH SEAT WORTH \$15,000

**Do these simple concepts work?** You bet they do! A common rule of thumb is that each member should generate about \$15,000 of sales per year. Usually that's \$15,000 of sales that would have never happened otherwise.

**What must you do to be successful?** It's not hard. First, come to every meeting. Protect your place at the table. If you don't, then your membership may be terminated, and one of your competitors may come in and take your \$15,000!

**Secondly, don't worry too much about getting referrals.** They will come. Concentrate on finding qualified referrals for your members.

**Thirdly, don't try to sell for your members.** Let them do that. Just make the referral.

And finally, have fun. You're likely to quickly build good friendships with people who have the same challenges, frustrations, and rewards that you have. And these relationships can be very meaningful.

### GETTING STARTED

**A Referral group will welcome your attendance.** After all, you're not only a prospective member, but also a prospect for them! Most groups will welcome you back for a second visit.

**After two visits, the group will expect you to make a decision.** You won't be able to visit indefinitely. Once you have made a decision to join, the group will then have a similar decision about extending a membership invitation to you.

**Not all applicants are invited to join.** The presence of someone in your field is an obvious issue (remember, only one member of a given field), but trade and personal reputation, community standing, and general impressions also count.

The best way to get started, of course, is to visit several groups. Be sure to take lots of business cards, because they're going to want those cards. Don't forget that these people are prospects for you, just as you are for them.

### GROUPS IN OUR AREA

My group is called Friends in Business, and we have active chapters in Fort Mill and Rock Hill. Business Network International (BNI) is another organization with active local chapters.

Contact me, and I'll be happy to put you in touch with both organizations.

Here's a final thought. That \$15,000 number is not brag. I have seen it happen.

1171 Market Street, Suite 206, Fort Mill, SC 29708  
Phone 803 802 7676

[www.beaconsmallbiz.com](http://www.beaconsmallbiz.com)

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