

## **Ideas for Building and Sustaining Relationships for Small Business Owners**

As a small business owner, relationships can make or break you. A relationship does not mean you are trying to get someone is going to buy something from you. You are trying to find people who will help you in the journey to success – connecting you with others who will become clients, advertising for you, connecting you with suppliers, and teaching you how to be better at what you are doing.

Here are some suggestions on how you can build and sustain relationships in your small business.

- 1) **Open a Microsoft Excel sheet and call it Contacts. Save it on a USB drive and on a desktop. Add everyone on there who has anything to do with your business, including address, telephone number, and email. This will help you keep in contact with them at least once each year. Update once each week.**

**Get a planner, every Friday of every week, write down “update contacts” so you can make it a point to update your Contact list each week.**

- 2) **Every other morning, go on social media. Add new friends and contacts – at least 5 each time. Then write comments for them on their posts so that they know you care – you are not around just to showcase yourself and your business. You read and comment on what others are doing.**

**Write 5 to 10 comments each time you visit.**

- 3) **For branding purposes, make sure all social media you use has the same logo/pictures/designs. This way, you’ll start developing brand recognition and trust.**
- 4) **When people follow you on social media, follow back. Again, this is not just about you – it’s about relationships.**
- 5) **Make it a point to talk to people who sit next to you, or behind you, or in front of you at meetings and conferences. Do not sell or attempt to sell – just let them know why you are there, and be authentic about how you are feeling and doing in your business.**

**Get the contact information to add them to social media and to your list of contacts.**

- 6) **Approach people during business networking meetings from a place of, “What can I do to help them” instead of “Let me tell them about my business so they can buy something.” You could get their information, though, and**

email them afterwards to tell them it was nice to meet them and you'll add them to your list of contacts to stay in touch.

- 7) Go to your planner or calendar, and write down once a month to text or email someone you have not connected with in a while to check on how they are doing. Also let them know how you are doing – including what your struggles or problems are at the moment. This will help show them that you are a real person with real problems honest enough to trust them with what's going on.
- 8) As much as possible when waiting in line somewhere, check for a quick text or email but not for long. Waiting is a perfect opportunity to make eye contact with people and smile. You don't need to start a relationship necessarily with people at that moment. If they see you again, they will likely remember you as an approachable person, not someone who didn't even bother to look at them or turn away because she didn't "know" them.
- 9) Select up to 5 places you can network on a consistent basis for 1 year. Give it 1 year. Networking is about knowing people – developing professional relationships. When you get to know them, add them to your contacts so the relationship can continue for years and years.
- 10) Talk about something personal when you are meeting someone – not private – personal. This will help them remember you more. You can write down 10 things that you are okay sharing about yourself somewhere to practice. For example: Number of kids, city in which you live, how many times you have moved, if parents are still alive, hobbies, favorite restaurants, favorite drinks, etc. If the person is going to judge you for who you are in a negative way, then it wasn't meant to be – it's okay if that relationship does not get cultivated.
- 11) Read 1 book every 2 to 3 months on relationship-building, connecting, or growing your business. This will help you become better at what you do.
- 12) When you go to an event, any event, look around and make eye contact with people. You can smile or just nod. This will help them see you are approachable. If you are at a table with people, make sure you say hello to each person. Don't start passing out cards or talk about your business right away so they can get to know you, first, before your business.