

Grow Your Reiki Business Through Networking

BY KAREN CAIG



Photo courtesy of Karen Caig

Women in Networking Northwest Arkansas has provided strong support for my business.

“WHAT IS IT YOU DO AGAIN?” my seventy-year-old neighbor asked with a squint while shielding his eyes from the sun. I had been living in the townhouse next to him for a year. He had always been friendly but a bit suspicious.

“I do Reiki. It’s a Japanese relaxation technique that promotes healing. I’d love for you to come to my office for a free session,” I answered. “Everyone can use some relaxation,” I added with a smile.

“Nah,” he grumbled. “That’s what I have Miller Lite® for,” and he turned and walked from his truck toward his door.

This response is not unusual for Arkansas or many other areas of the country. Northwest Arkansas, headquarters for Walmart, J.B. Hunt, and Tyson, has attracted people from all over the globe, but it still provides a challenge for building a strong Reiki business. However, the last few months have brought me, new clients and students, because I stumbled onto the secret that all good business owners know about—networking.

Networking for my Reiki business was entirely off my radar. I knew about the Chamber of Commerce and had even attended some after-hour mixers in Texas years ago as part of a family business. It was uncomfortable for me—people drinking, min-

gling, and making small talk. I didn’t understand how networking works. Now I would know what to do. Networking works better than Eventbrite, Meetup, social media, and distributing flyers to metaphysical stores if you know how to network in conservative areas and where to find networking events.

Why Networking Works

My education began when my massage therapist friend invited me as a visitor to what she described as a “fun group of business-people.” Because I was desperate to meet some people, I decided to meet with them the next Thursday morning at 8:30. I arrived dressed in a navy blue, casual suit, and plopped down in an open chair. My friend hadn’t arrived yet, so I just smiled at everyone. She ran in at the last minute and hugged me before we began.

“Welcome to the Masterminds of Business,” a short, dark-haired woman boomed, “Otherwise known as...”

“THE M.O.B.!” everyone chimed in.

“My name is Amanda, and I am your M.O.B. Boss. We are the fastest growing networking group in Northwest Arkansas with 16 chapters and over 200 members. Our purpose is to pass referrals and close business.” We passed around boxes filled with business cards, and my friend told me to put mine in the visitor box. Then, one by one, we stood and gave our 30-second elevator speech. I don’t know when I memorized one, but I was able to stand, smile, and blurt out, “Hi! My name is Karen Caig. I own Arkansas Reiki Institute. If you don’t know what Reiki is, it’s a Japanese relaxation technique that promotes healing, and over 800 hospitals in the United States use it. A good referral for me is anyone who is struggling with anxiety, depression, or chronic pain. Again, I’m Karen with Arkansas Reiki Institute, where we do *Natural Healing in the Natural State*.” So I sat down with my heart beating hard. What did I just do? I just asked these people to send me business. I had never done that before.

I began a Reiki practice because I had a gift, and I wanted to help people. I didn’t start my business to make money. The business side always came far behind my desire to help people heal. However, since I had quit my teaching career to pursue my Reiki business full time, I quickly realized, as I watched my bank account deplete month by month, that I had to consider the business side of my practice. I can’t help anyone if I can’t

support myself. So, I have healed those money issues. Now I am learning how to be a businessperson, not just a healer.

Joining the Masterminds of Business (M.O.B.) was the catalyst into a new world. Members told me about free networking events I should attend. I went. I stood up in front of everyone and talked about Reiki. I gave away free sessions as door prizes. I made appointments to have coffee with people. I kept going to events. People started to know me and trust me. Many came for free sessions. One man, a sales representative for Legal Shield, experienced near-miraculous healing during his free session, and he told everyone who would listen about how his chronic arthritis healed in his knee instantly. People began to warm and trust me more, which is leading to more referrals.

Here's why networking person-to-person works better than any other kind of marketing. When I meet someone at a networking event, I think, "How can I help this person? Whom can I refer to this business? Whom do I know that may be able to provide what they need for their business?" People don't run from me even if they don't understand what it is that I do. They *want* to understand. They want *my* business and want me to send people to *them*. Therefore, they *need* to know me.

As entrepreneurs, we need strong relationships with others. We are looking for customers and even opportunities to collaborate. As Paola Dubini and Howard Aldrich, two business professors, point out, "Networking...refers to the expectation that many times both parties are investing in a long-term relation. Consider three benefits that follow from creating a social context in which people expect to deal with each other frequently over an extended period: trust, predictability, and voice [speaking up about a problem], rather than exit [ceasing to do business with someone]."¹ To create a thriving Reiki business, we need an extended-business family.

I have met some life coaches, massage therapists, chiropractors, and nutritionists, but most people I meet are insurance salesmen, realtors, mortgage lenders, car salespeople, graphic designers, IT specialists, photographers, restaurant owners, and financial advisors. I have not met one Reiki Master Teacher. Most of them, like me, probably don't think about going to these networking events. Like me, they probably think of warm markets like metaphysical stores or "new age" fairs, which we don't have where I live—yet. Reiki has helped me realize that my purpose is to educate people about Reiki, not just give sessions and teach others to do Reiki.

How to Network

When you network with others, dress conservatively. I usually wear slacks and a top or a knit suit. I grew up in conservative East Texas, so I know how to blend. Save your beautiful, flowy dresses, tie-dye, and Hawaiian shirts for the Reiki retreat. You want to earn

the trust of bankers and corporate executives, so dress as they do.

Keep your focus on business. At an event, when you meet someone, ask what they do and think of how you can help them. Don't start talking about Reiki and how they need some stress reduction as a high-end realtor or ask if they need you to cleanse any negativity out of a house they're trying to sell (I've actually been asked to do that by a realtor I met through networking). As a new networking friend told me, give people the 30,000-foot view of your business and keep it simple. You can go into more detail as you get to know them. Activate your Reiki before you go in and ask for guidance to the people whose acquaintance will be mutually beneficial. Just be your authentic self. It has taken me some time to be comfortable in this networking environment but activating Reiki and focusing on how I might help someone keeps me from feeling anxious.

Bring your calendar and focus on setting up one-on-one meetings. This step is the most important. You can't get to know someone in a three-minute conversation in a crowded room. At a networking event, you should meet new people and collect cards so you can set up meetings later if necessary. The real magic happens when you sit down for coffee and learn about the other person. So far, I've met only one person that I would not recommend for business. He forgot about our first one-on-one meeting. When we finally did meet for a one-on-one, the things he said about his ex-wife and the way he treated the server disappointed me. If I refer business to someone, I want it to be someone I trust. Therefore, it's essential to be yourself during these meetings but try to present your best self.

To understand what kind of referrals to watch for, ask people about their last ten clients. That will give you a specific type of person to help or a particular problem that you will now know how to solve. Ask them what they love most about their business, what their biggest challenges are, what other jobs they have had. If you know people that may help them in their business, share their information or offer to connect them through an email message. For example, I had a financial advisor connect me with a prisoner reform program and hospice program. These one-on-ones are enjoyable, but we sit down with a clear goal—to learn more about the person, so we feel comfortable referring our friends and contacts.

Finally, do some follow-up. Send an email or even a hand-written thank you note to people with whom you have had one-on-one meetings. Let them know you appreciate their time. If you think your connection is mutually beneficial, offer to meet again to discuss plans. Ask if they were able to connect with people you recommended. A note shows you want to help them and keeps you and your business on their minds.

Where to Network

I don't recommend Business Networking International (BNI) because it is so expensive (\$700 a year in my area). The M.O.B. started in Missouri and has spread only to Northwest Arkansas so far. Membership costs \$100 per year. I'm sure you can find other local networking groups. In my area, the local Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hosts a weekly "Central Referral Connection" that is free. This Chamber of Commerce costs only \$30 per month, and I will be joining soon.

Interestingly, it's not the Chamber of Commerce of Bentonville, the location of my business office. That Chamber is not as active. Before joining a Chamber of Commerce, please do some research to see how active it is and attend a free mixer. Also, I suggest you do an internet search for "free business networking near me." Send Reiki to your intention, and you will find the group you need. Other possibilities include the Rotary Club and other local service organizations that focus on service and leadership development. Look for the best Chamber of Commerce in your area and start there. You need only one to three reliable groups to get started. I attend my M.O.B. meetings, CRC meetings, and Women in Networking meetings. These groups have pulled my business into the mainstream market.

As my M.O.B. Boss says to all new members, "Think of us as your personal marketing team." Now I am part of a team instead of a "woman that does something with her hands." Dale Carnegie was right: "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."² Thanks to Reiki, I have overcome my hang-ups about money and fears of failure. Thanks to networking, I am a successful businessperson. ✨



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Endnotes

- ¹ Dubini, Paola, and Howard Aldrich. "Personal and Extended Networks Are Central to the Entrepreneurial Process." *Journal of Business Venturing* 6, no. 5 (1991): 305-13. doi:10.1016/0883-9026(91)90021-5.
- ² "Dale Carnegie Quotes." BrainyQuote. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dale_carnegie_103476.