

Networking – It’s Not Just About the New People

Our definition of networking is too narrow.

Sure, most professionals quickly figure out that networking isn’t just about handing out business cards and talking a good game. There’s a wealth of information out there about forming new connections that are valuable and sustainable, not just scattershot.

But all of the talk around networking is still missing something. What if networking wasn’t just about meeting **new** connections?

There are a few important things any businessperson needs to know. One of those is that gaining **new** customers costs more than keeping and increasing the value of **current** customers.

Your connections are your customers. So if you have a LinkedIn account stocked with a couple of hundred current connections, maybe now’s the time to spend less time on growing your network and more time on nurturing the connections you have. Networks aren’t just about breadth – they’re also about depth.

The means doing valuable things to “re-network” with the people you’ve known for years.

Wow current clients with extra attention to detail. Thank past clients or coworkers with good referrals or high praise. Take time to send personal messages of congratulations or sympathy or encouragement. Take time to have conversations. Take time to share interesting resources. Ask for favors. Take time to meet up for coffee and share knowledge. Take time to go to their events and cheer them on. Take time to contribute work or support or feedback to their projects.

When you do all of these things, you grow the value of each connection you have.

These are all low-cost investments. You don’t even have to leave home to do them. They can happen over dinner, over drinks, or over LinkedIn. But if you’re serious about deepening your network relationships, growing your network’s total size takes care of itself: if you have a few dozen connections who love you because of your value-oriented relationship with them, they’ll be glad to introduce you to dozens of more people who are just right to work with you.

And if they do that, you can save yourself the time and energy and soul-death of going to networking events in the first place.