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Open Up To Networking

By Juliet Farmer



We've all heard about the power of networking. Bookstores have whole sections on the subject. But hearing how important it is and understanding how crucial it is to the success of you and your business are two entirely different things. [*Continue >*](#)





In a nutshell, business networking is the give and take of ideas, leads, recommendations and other information between colleagues. Networking in this way can foster referrals, improve a business reputation, offer credibility to a start-up, and strengthen relationship assets.

Today's world makes business networking easier than it has ever been before with the power of technology. The Internet offers users the chance to "talk" to and "meet" people they may have never had the opportunity to meet otherwise, whether it's someone a state away or across the world.

According to Ivan Misner, founder and CEO of Business Network International (BNI) and author of five books including his New York Times bestseller *Masters of Networking*, there are a handful of types of networking groups. (BNI is the world's largest referral organization with Chapters in many countries around the globe.)

The first type of networking group is the casual contact network, such as a local Chamber of Commerce, which is a business group that allows individuals from various overlapping professions to participate. These groups meet regularly and often hold mixers where everyone mingles informally, as well as have occasional presentations by guest speakers on important business topics and discussions on local business issues. This is one of the best ways to get involved in the local community.





The second is the strong contact network, which is a group that meets weekly for the primary purpose of exchanging referrals. This type of group often restricts membership to only one person per profession or specialty, and the meetings are structured and can include open networking, as well as presentations by members.

The third is the community service club, which gives you an opportunity to put something back into the community where you do business, yet also allows you to get your company name in front of consumers and foster a sense of good will, which often leads to word-of-mouth business. Examples of these types of groups include Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis Clubs.

The fourth group is the professional association, whose members are usually from one specific industry, and whose purpose is the exchange of information and ideas. These groups also offer you a chance to hone in on your target markets. Some good examples are the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association.

The last group is the social/business organization, such as singles/business clubs, which openly combine social activities with business or networking, giving you an opportunity to combine work and socializing in one fell swoop.





Once you've chosen the group or groups you're interested in, Misner offers sound advice for establishing quality relationships within those groups. First, focus on building relationships by taking the time to get to know other members, especially outside of the business environment.

And forget WIIFM (what's in it for me). Instead, focus on what you can offer others, such as sharing trade "secrets" or inviting someone to join you in business meetings that helps position him/her favorably with others he/she needs to get to know. Misner says that only by giving can you gain.

Case in point: Dave Pettigrew, owner of Diamond D Concrete (www.diamonddcompany.com) in Capitola, Calif., and Michael Rogers, owner of Faux Today (www.fauxtoday.com) in Portland, Oregon, who met via The Concrete Network and can both attest to the power of networking.

A few years ago, Pettigrew was doing research on the Internet and he stumbled across The Concrete Network and its owner, Jim Peterson. Pettigrew called Peterson, and shortly thereafter, Diamond D had its own Web presence on the network.

"I got tons of work and emails and calls from all over the world when I got my website," Pettigrew says.

One such email was from Rogers, who has been in faux for over 20 years has a wall covering line, and is one of only 20 SkimStone (www.skimstone.com) instructors in the country. "I was excited about decorative concrete floors, but I knew I needed to learn more about them," Rogers recalls.



Dave Pettigrew, owner of [Diamond D Concrete](http://www.diamonddcompany.com)



“I found The Concrete Network and talked to Jim, then saw a photo of the week for Diamond D Concrete. I was getting ready to take a class and sent Dave an email explaining that I was looking for decorative field experience. Dave emailed me back his phone number and I called him.”



[Diamond D Concrete](#)

After that almost-hour-long conversation on a Saturday evening, Pettigrew invited Rogers to come down for a job he was starting on Monday morning. “I was in the middle of a 7,000-square-foot slab in San Jose that I was going to saw cut and stain, and I told Michael he could come down to watch and learn,” Pettigrew explains. “But I warned him that it wasn’t a seminar and I wasn’t going to be ‘teaching’ him.”

“I gave it some thought, and I knew I could learn more on a job site than in any class, so I said yes,” Rogers comments. “I met Dave Monday morning and spent the week with him, which was a good move on my part.”

“Michael watched and helped me stain, wash and seal the concrete in one week...When he left he said it was the experience of his life, and he felt he could stain concrete on his own,” says Pettigrew. “We respect each other’s abilities, and we have the beginnings of a friendship that can be a win-win for a long time.”





Michael Rogers, owner
of [Faux Today](#)

“We got along really well, and he’s really talented and shared lots of ‘secrets’ with me,” adds Rogers of the experience. “Dave has an open door policy, and I got to see the job from start to finish. He also took me on some estimates, and he showed me some of his finished jobs. We even made some samples for me to take home.”

Pettigrew is even planning to join Rogers in Southern California in the next few months for some jobs Rogers has lined up. “Michael wants me to help,” Pettigrew adds, “and he’s bringing in revenue for both of us.”

Pettigrew notes that it’s a big step for concrete contractors to move into The decorative market, and the staining and coloring learning curve is steep. “If I can lessen the curve and make the marketplace stronger, that’s what I’m into doing,” Pettigrew laughs.

Though some might not be as open as Pettigrew, he says he’s not worried about giving away too much.

“I realize now that the more I share with people learning, the stronger the market will be as a whole,” says Pettigrew. “I figured out by doing it, and no one can steal who I am. If you want a Diamond D floor, you can only get it from me.”



“Getting to that point is one advantage of being in the market for so long, I have confidence,” Pettigrew concludes. “I don’t ever want to be closed off.”

And that’s the key to successful networking.



Faux Today wall project by Michael Rogers.



Sherpa info

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SUMMIT DATE

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NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

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ABOUT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

The Concrete Sherpa is a team of people that represent the experience, teaching and learning of our team members and other industry leaders *on a mission to make life better for the concrete contractor*. We are an idea center striving to deliver thought provoking ideas based on “Concrete Advice for Business and Life” to stimulate you to reach new heights. As a user, you should remember to consider all information you receive, here at the Concrete Sherpa or elsewhere, not as a *cast in concrete* recommendation, but rather as an idea for you to consider and ponder.



Sherpa info

THE JOURNEY LEADING TO THE CONCRETE SHERPA PROJECT

The Concrete Sherpa Project (A [Sherpa](#) is a “guide”) was born at The Concrete Network in mid 2004. Here is how it happened:

The biggest surprise, or gift, since starting The Concrete Network in 1999 has been the concrete contractor friends from around the country we’ve made and witnessing the passion they have for what they do. These people include Dave Pettigrew, up in the San Francisco Bay Area, or the Verlennich brothers in Minnesota, or Bob Harris in Georgia, the list goes on and on. It’s quite inspiring.

We were once asked, “How are you so excited every day about concrete?” Well the answer is simple, it is impossible to not be excited about concrete when you have the job we do—interacting with hundreds of concrete contractors from every state in the country.

The thing we’ve learned about concrete contractors is that most are passionate *craftsmen*—they are often less passionate and experienced in the “office stuff”. Human nature channels us to do what we are most comfortable with; learning how to use a new saw-cutting tool is comfortable; learning and implementing a new estimating strategy, or job management tool, is not so comfortable.



Sherpa info

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

So Sherpa was born to provide FREE and easy to use information on topics many contractors are not too comfortable with.

- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help to contractors who are often 'Lone Rangers' and don't have anyone to get solid business advice from.
- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help for contractors who have to work too hard and too many hours in their business, and one day realize they need to work *on their business, not in their business*.
- Have fun with Concrete Sherpa and go faster towards reaching success than you might have on your own.
- To skeptics who think something free can't be valuable, or there must be a trick- visit Concrete Sherpa and decide for yourself.

We hope you make great use of the Concrete Sherpa and it helps you to become an awesome success for yourself, your family, your church, and your community.

VISIT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

To visit the Concrete Sherpa click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com>.

