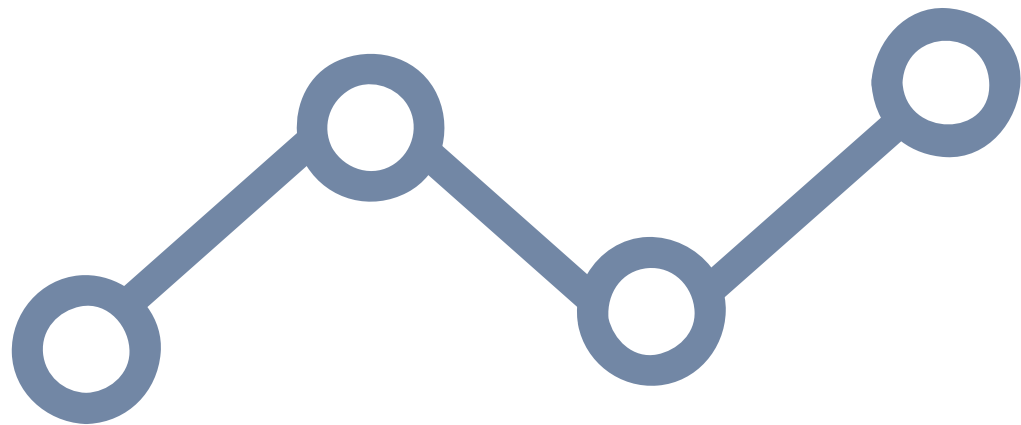


CREATING CONNECTIONS



A GUIDE TO
POWERFUL, PURPOSEFUL
SMALL BUSINESS
NETWORKING

by Sandra Kahale

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Powerful, Purposeful Networking

Networking can be a real boost to your business. But it takes more than **reciting your elevator pitch and handing out business cards** to succeed.

A lot of networking events seem to be organized around the idea that connecting is a numbers game, or that the only reason for business people to meet is to **buy and sell**.

But real networking success isn't just about how many people you meet in a night... how polished your pitch is... how many business cards you collect... or whether you find a prospect.

It's about **real conversations, real connections**, and giving and getting **real value** from being out in the **community** with other business owners — whether they end up becoming customers or not.

As business people, it's our job to make good on our own businesses. But our community is richer when we also **support each other's success**.

Wherever you are in business or life, **you have things to learn and things to teach**. You've got insight someone might benefit from, and questions someone might answer.

Networking is the perfect way to engage not only as prospects but also as co-creators of our **local business communities**. And to build powerful, purposeful connections as we do.

The 108 conversation starters in this book reflect my own networking experiences over several years.

When I first started going to networking events, they seemed **pointless and a little boring**. But friends would drag me out again, and every once in a while I'd have incredible conversations that really **propelled my business forward**.

I soon discovered that I could consistently have great networking experiences just by:

- 1. Looking not just for clients and customers, but also for colleagues, collaborators, and community**
 - 2. Engaging people in real conversations about topics that impact us all as business owners**
-

I've supported my **personal, professional and business development** by having the conversations you'll find in this book. I've also helped create a **supportive, open small business culture** in my community for myself and other entrepreneurs.

Approaching networking from a collegial, community-oriented perspective **opens possibilities far beyond landing a customer**. It instantly **relaxes and connects** people. And it enables you to have **powerful, purposeful conversations** with anyone you meet.

Chapter 2

Quick Connection: A Case Study

About 2 months ago, I was at a networking event and found myself chatting with a real estate guy named Sean.

I asked Sean what was working well in his business and he told me about a lead generation book he had written on how to stage your house to sell it. I was intrigued.

I learned that he'd written the book as part of a Write a Book in 90 Minutes program. I told him I'd been wanting to write a book but didn't feel I could make the time.

For weeks after that conversation, the idea of writing a book kept coming back to me. I didn't believe it would take 90 minutes, but it suddenly seemed likely that it could be done in much less time than I imagined.

One thing led to another. A few weeks later, this very book was completed. Just like that.

If I had focused on whether Sean needed my web writing services, or moved on because it seemed pretty quickly that he didn't, this book wouldn't exist.

Sean moved my business forward in a single powerful, purposeful 15-minute conversation. I'm thrilled. And he's thrilled, too, to have shared something that turned out to be so valuable.

I'd say that's a pretty great return on networking for both of us.

**Connection is the
energy
that exists between
people when
they feel seen, heard,
and valued.**

Brené Brown

Chapter 3

Four Connections to Boost Your Business

You'll make all kinds of great connections when you start having powerful, purposeful conversations with other business owners.

Four especially valuable ones to focus on:

① ALLIES

Allies share similar goals and markets. For example, a life coach might find allies who offer nutrition, career testing, or art therapy services to add value for his or her clients.

② AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors are people who are happy to spread the word about you and your business. Fans and happy customers make great ambassadors. Leverage them by collecting testimonials and other social proof for your web site.

③ AIDES

Aides help you get things done so you can focus on the places where you really add value. Writers, web masters, bookkeepers, and admin support are good examples of aides.

④ EXPEDITERS

Expeditors clear blockages. These can be administrative or bureaucratic, like business registration and licensing, or other kinds like lacking the confidence to do sales effectively.

Work it: Taking Stock

① ALLIES. Who shares similar business goals and/or the same target market?

② AMBASSADORS. Who could help you spread the word about your business?

③ AIDES. Who can help you get things done?

④ EXPEDITERS. Who can help you clear blockages and move things forward? (E.g. coaches, event organizers, influencers)?

Take Action. Where is your network weak? What kinds of relationships will you focus on?

1 ALLIES

Finding Your People

With a little creativity, you can find allies in all sorts of unexpected places.

Evolve Professional, in Westbury, N.Y., makes upscale men's grooming products and sells them through an offbeat network of allies who serve the same target customer: cigar shop owners.

When owner Daniel Marrone started Evolve, he knew that the kind of men who would most value his upscale grooming products would be unlikely to go into stores to shop for them. So instead he went in search of shops where a man might spend \$50 on a cigar.

Marrone visits the store, buys a cigar, and smokes it while studying the clientele. He looks for successful, well put-together men aged 40 to 60 with expensive taste.

If he finds them, he approaches the shop about holding in-store demonstrations of his razors, brushes and shaving creams. He recruits barbers who offer shaves, explain the art of good grooming, and sell products. Some cigar shops also agree to stock them.

It's an offbeat sales channel – and it works.

Read Evolve's full story and more like it in the Globe and Mail at:
<http://tinyurl.com/nyc8xo8>

Work It: Scan for Allies

Describe your ideal customer.

What goals and aspirations do they have?

What are their hobbies and interests?

What types of businesses would be natural allies for you (e.g. an independent dental hygienist is a natural ally for a dentist)?

What types of business might be offbeat allies for your product or service? Who attracts the same target customer for different reasons?

2 AMBASSADORS

Spreading the Word

Ambassadors are enthusiastic about you, your business, and the value you create. They're fans who spread the word, often without you even knowing it.

You can harness the power of word of mouth and expand the reach of your happy customers by getting testimonials.

The best testimonials are authentic and relatable. They address the predictable questions and concerns of potential buyers. And give people enough context that they can see themselves in the shoes of your happy customers.

So, for example, “Good, affordable roofing” is not as powerful a testimonial as “Our roof was falling apart and we were afraid it would cost a fortune to fix. We were delighted by how affordable your price was and how well you did the work.”

These types of testimonials also have a significant impact on sales, especially online, where people rely more heavily on comments and reviews to help them make buying decisions.

Find out more about how to maximize testimonials, especially online, at <http://tinyurl.com/hx62jpw>

Work It: Expand Your Ambassadors

Who is a fan of you and your products, services or business? Brainstorm 5-10 names.

Get some testimonials! Make them good ones by asking your fans good questions, like:

- ☐ What were you looking for when you hired us?
- ☐ Why did you choose us?
- ☐ How has our product or service changed things for you?
- ☐ How would you describe the experience of working with us/using our product or service?
- ☐ Would you recommend us and why?

What specific questions would help draw out the best stories from your happy customers?

3 AIDES CHECKLIST

Finding Professional Help

- ☐ Get clear on what you need done. Write it down.
- ☐ Make a list of any questions you might have about your tasks, the people who do them, or the processes involved. Find somebody to ask now or save them for later.
- ☐ Seek out referrals. Let people know you're in the market. Tell anybody whose experience or opinion you value. Consider using this excuse to reconnect with old contacts.
- ☐ Follow up on the names you get. Take note of whether you like how – and how quickly – they respond. This can be a good indicator of what they'll be like to work with later.
- ☐ Describe your project clearly and concisely. Tell them what you're looking for and what you hope to achieve. Share your questions. Ask them if they're a good fit.

Ready to move ahead? Set clear parameters for the work and make sure you both understand them. Check that:

- ☐ The scope is clear
- ☐ They have what they need from you to get started
- ☐ You've agreed on timelines

Depending on the project, you might also consider:

- ☐ What happens if you aren't happy with the work they provide?
- ☐ What kind of files will you get? Can you edit or change them?
- ☐ Are revisions included in the fee? How many?
- ☐ What happens in case of cancellation?
- ☐ What are the payment terms?
- ☐ _____?

Work It: Aides to the Rescue

A major milestone for small business owners is recognizing that it's time to get some help. Do it as soon and as often as you can (if not sooner!).

Focus your own time and energy on generating revenue. Consider what types of tasks you could outsource in each of these categories:

- ☐ Administrative tasks _____
- ☐ Research _____
- ☐ Bookkeeping _____
- ☐ Email _____
- ☐ Website development and maintenance _____
- ☐ Search Engine Optimization _____
- ☐ Social media _____
- ☐ Blogging _____

List 5 things on your To Do List right now that you could probably outsource.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How could freeing up that time benefit your business?

Can you commit to outsourcing at least one thing on your list this week?

4 EXPEDITERS

There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.

George Shinn

Work It: Break Down Barriers

Expeditors are people who can help us push through (or go around!) the many barriers and challenges we can face in our businesses. They're people we can count on to be on our team, literally or figuratively.

Take Action

Mindset Sometimes the barriers we create for ourselves can be the hardest to overcome. Who can you turn to for help with motivation, confidence, or accountability?

Knowledge Learning and development are an important part of business. From technical skills to strategy, where can you turn for knowledge and resources?

Access Having trouble connecting with the right people? Who – or what – can help? Consider people, events, and tools (e.g. LinkedIn).

Bureaucracy Who can help you cut through or navigate red tape (e.g. permits, customs clearance, etc.)?

Resources Where can you find resources – money, people, supplies, etc. – for your business?

Other Barriers What other barriers do you face in your business? Who can help you overcome them?

Chapter 4

Starting Conversations

The 108 conversation starters in this book unleash ideas and insights by helping you start interesting, intentional conversations. You can use them:

- On your own, to reflect on your business
- At networking events, to create connections & exchange insights with people you meet
- In masterminds or other business groups, to guide growth-oriented conversations

In my experience, good conversations often start with good questions. Ask about things that are relevant to you and your business. Do it in general terms that help the other person reflect on, process, and share, benefiting both of you.

Look for what you can add to and take from each conversation. Recognize that you can give and take value in every interaction.

Try to be both interesting and interested, in roughly equal measure. Don't dominate the conversation, but don't act like an interviewer or audience member either – contribute and engage.

Finally, even if you feel shy, remember that connecting is a deeply human activity, and that while making the first move can be a little uncomfortable, people really do want to connect.

**The currency of real
networking is not
greed
but generosity.**

Keith Ferrazzi

10 Easy Icebreakers

1 What brought you here today?

2 Tell me about your business.

3 How did you get into your line of work?

4 What's the best networking advice you've ever heard?

5 What's the worst networking advice you've ever heard?

6 Read any great business books lately?

7 What's the best thing that's happened to you so far today?

8 What's the best business conference you've been to?

9 What tool or resource do you use that every business owner should know about?

10 What do you love to do when you're not working?

Conversations that Connect

What's the **best thing** that's
happened to you this **week?**

What's working really well in your business?

What victory are you celebrating?

What have you learned recently?

What's your secret mission?

What do you like most about owning a business?

What's the biggest shift happening in your industry?

What marketing techniques have worked for you?

What's a good referral for you?

What's an **opportunity** that you're
excited about right **now?**

What kinds of **contacts** would be **most helpful** to you right **now**?

What makes people choose to work with or buy from you?

Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently when you started your business?

What kinds of clients or customers do you most love to work with?

Who do you provide the most value for?

What training programs or books have helped you?

What's the best marketing lesson you've learned?

In your experience, are personal growth and business growth related?

What's it like to work with or buy from you?

What have **you learned** about **discipline** in **business**?

Conversations that Connect

What's a **risk** that you've taken
that **paid off**?

What's easy for you in your business? What's hard?

What are you grateful for right now?

What was your first business? Why did you start it?

What's the best sales advice you've heard?

What are some brands that you love? Why?

What have you had to teach yourself in your business? How did you do it?

What do you think matters more: formal education or self-education?

What do you think **the secret** to
success is?

Were you **born** an entrepreneur or did you **become one**?

What does work/life balance mean to you? Do you have it?

What's something you recently did in your business for the first time?

Who inspires you in your business or life?

What's the best business advice you ever got?

What's the worst business advice you've heard?

What advice would you give a person getting started in your line of business today?

What business skill would you like to develop more? Why?

What's your **biggest strength** as a **business person**?

Conversations that Connect

What's been a **big boost**
to your **business**?

Where have your best opportunities come from?

What's already a dream come true in your business?

What's something you're working on right now?

What takes up most of your time at work?

What would you like more of in your business?

What would you like less of?

What's something you wish you knew more about?

Do you do anything right now that you could probably outsource? What keeps you from outsourcing?

What's a dream you're **working**
toward right **now**?

What's made you **proud** as a business owner?

How much business planning do you do?

What's an obstacle you're facing right now?

What's been your biggest challenge in your business?

What part of your business brings you the most joy?

What opportunities are you currently working on?

Where do your best business ideas come from?

What technology can't you live without?

What **big question** are you **facing** in your business at the **moment**?

Conversations that Connect

What's the **next** big, bold **challenge**
for you **in your business?**

What could you use help with in your business?
How could you get that help?

What would you have to do to double your business?

Who's a perfect client or customer for you?

What metrics do you pay the most attention to in your
business? Why?

What do you think is important to focus on to grow your
business?

What changes are happening in your industry now? How do
they impact you?

What's a **mistake** you see people
in **your industry making?**

Where are you **making good progress** in your business?

What do you do in your personal life that helps you be successful in your professional life?

How is your unique style and personality reflected in your business?

What's a personal trait you have that helps you be successful?

What does business success mean to you?

What's your best leadership tip?

What tools have been game-changers for you?

Who is your greatest teacher?

What's a **characteristic** you've noticed in **successful business people**?

Small Talk about Big Ideas

The world is changing very fast. Big will not beat small anymore. It will be the fast beating the slow.

Rupert Murdoch

What kind of competition is more challenging for you: big or fast?

A business that makes nothing but money is a poor one.

Henry Ford

What does your business make other than money?

I always did something I was a little not ready to do. I think that's how you grow.

Marissa Mayer

What have you done that you weren't really ready to? What happened?

Courage is taking action, no matter what.

Richelle E. Goodrich

What's taken courage to do in your business?
How did you do it?

If you can dream it, you can do it.

Walt Disney

What dreams do you have for your business?

Design your business so it serves your ultimate lifestyle.

Michael Port

Is your business designed around your lifestyle goals? How?

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

What are you excited about in your business right now?

Small Talk about Big Ideas

**If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go with others.**

African Proverb

What's an example of how you've been able to go farther by working with others?

**The way to get started is to quit talking
and begin doing.**

Walt Disney

What's something you took a while to get to but finally did?

**Try not to become a man of success, but rather a man
of value.**

Albert Einstein

What values are at the heart of what you do and how you do it?

Opportunities don't happen. You create them.

Chris Grosser

How do you create opportunity?

Ideas are easy. Implementation is hard.

Guy Kawasaki

What ideas are you currently implementing? How's it going?

Behold the turtle, he makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.

Bruce Levin

What's a risk you've taken recently?

Trust your instincts.

Estée Lauder

What role do instincts play in how you run your business?

Small Talk about Big Ideas

Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.

Maya Angelou

What do you like about what you do and how you do it?

The essential question is not, “How busy are you?” but “What are you busy at?”

Oprah Winfrey

What are you busy at in your business? Why?

**We hate small talk
because we hate
the barrier it creates
between people.**

Laurie Helgoe

10 Easy Exit Lines

1 I've loved this chat. Let's keep in touch!

2 This has been so interesting, but I don't want to monopolize your time. Let's stay connected!

3 From our conversation, I think you'd really enjoy talking to _____.
Let me introduce you.

4 Thanks for talking with me. You've given me lots to think about!

5 This has been great. There are some other people I wanted to connect with, too; let's keep in touch.

6 It's been so nice to meet you. Thank you!

7 I've got to close the loop with some folks before I go, but I'll be in touch.

8 Thank you so much - this has been so interesting! I'm happy to have met you.

9 I have to excuse myself, but I've really enjoyed our chat. Thank you!

10 I've enjoyed our chat. Is there anybody else here you think I should meet?

Chapter 5

Staying Connected: A Simple Formula

Each day, take a few minutes to tend to your connections and nurture your relationships. Consider both what you can offer and what you need.

Plan out your week.

Who will I reach out to this week?	What can I offer? (A resource, an introduction, a referral, advice, etc.)

What help could I use? (Advice, support, an introduction, a referral, some help, a pep talk, etc.)	Who can I reach out to?



Writer, communications coach, trainer and facilitator, Sandra Kahale, works with entrepreneurs to plan, start, and communicate their businesses.

Her inspiring, informative workshops cover topics including business planning, online communications, networking, and small business success.

Learn more about Sandra, book a live event, and find other Small Business Guides in this series at www.onwordconsulting.com.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Powerful, purposeful networking isn't about how many people you can meet in one night or the number of business cards you hand out.

It's about real conversations, real connections, and giving & getting real value.

Assess your current network, learn the 4 types of connections every small business owner should be making, and ignite your networking with 108 powerful conversation starters to help you unleash ideas and insights about business, success, growth, and more.

"Got us all talking and connecting!"

"Invigorating"

"Lively, fun, awesome way to meet other business owners, network and get more involved"

"Fun, good way to connect"

Find more Small Business Guides to support your success at
www.onwordconsulting.com