

# Let's talk: Networking

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By Loren Webb

**After interviewing many entrepreneurs and business leaders over the years, Dynamic Business knows how incredibly valuable networking is for creating opportunities for your business and career.**

In our [podcast episode with Petr Adamek](#), for example, who is now the CEO of Canberra Innovation Network (CIN), Petr explained how he got to his position through a series of events that originated from a simple tweet. On Twitter he was introduced to a co-working space in the city, where he went on to network with the right people and started working at CIN.

Another podcast example is our interview with [Dimmi founder Stevan Premutico](#), who after several setbacks in securing investment for his Dimmi idea in London, found funding from a friend of a friend back in Australia when he reached out and told people of his situation.

Shark Tank's [Steve Baxter saved himself \\$700k](#) in the early days of his business by reluctantly attending a tech conference and learning an insider secret that fixed his hardware; he consequently avoided a huge upgrade and fee from their existing vendor who had said that was the only solution.

The examples could go on and on... but today what we're really interested in on this subject is whether face-to-face business networking is perhaps more important than online networking.

How important is the 'face-to-face' element of networking, in your opinion?

Make sure you have your say in our Dynamic Poll, or let us know your thoughts on our social channels.

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## Heath Fitzpatrick, Chief Operating Officer, ebroker

Networking is one of the most underrated activities, whether business or personal. It is so much more than just creating business opportunities, it is about creating relationships and nurturing them. While one of the main functions and goals of networking is to create opportunities, it also gives to those who engage in it so much more. It provides valuable information on industry and social trends, exchanges of ideas and feedback on an array of things.

Networking is not only done within the same industry, it can be done with your barista, people you travel with, people you meet exercising or hobby with. For an individual, investing in professional and personal relationships can be one of the most rewarding and profitable things we do.

## Eamon Ridgway, National Strategic Manager, ipSCAPE

Networking is extremely important for any business that wishes to build brand awareness among businesses and foster future and current relationships. Through nurturing current clients, businesses are able to build familiarity and trust. Whereas with new business, networking is an integral component of the Sales process in identifying whether a business is a good 'fit'.

As ipSCAPE primarily operates within the Contact Centre space which, traditionally has an average sales cycle of 5-7 years, can make it difficult to remain 'top of mind'. Hosting and/or attending networking functions, allows us to connect with our prospects, partners and clients whilst providing the right occasion for discussions around internal priorities and assessing whether there is further opportunity to work together.

### **Melissa Haywood, Head of Vistaprint in Australia, Vistaprint Australia**

As a budding entrepreneur or small business owner, developing a strong professional network is essential to giving your goals the best chance to thrive.

While an active online profile is important in expanding and maintaining relationships, networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn should not be a replacement for in-person conversations. Developing robust relationships and discussing creative and strategic plans is most efficiently done through regular coffee catch ups, lunches, and in-person meetings.

Putting yourself physically in front of your networks not only increases memorability, it gives you the opportunity to speak up and be heard in real time. Chatting face-to-face increases your chance of being understood, as well as discovering and building chemistry in your relationships. This intangible aspect to conversations is what leads to finding life-long mentors and long-term employers, investors, and business partners. Receiving a 'friend request' or pinging a message to someone online doesn't come with the same spark as catching up in-person, where you can exchange marketing collateral and tangible contact information through business cards.

### **Jenny Lau, Special Counsel, Sierra Legal**

In this digital age, a lot of our relationships can be managed through a screen (think social media, email and Skype). For this reason, I think face-to-face business networking is extremely important.

Face-to-face meetings can humanise the business relationship. There is so much information to be gained about a person, their personal and business preferences, and their challenges from their facial expressions and body language. Similarly, I can show understanding, appreciation and compassion much better face-to-face. This can help me to build rapport and trust, which is very important in our role as trusted legal advisers. I'm no longer just some advice on a screen, I'm a person with whom you can confide/consult and collaborate.

### **Lana Weal, Marketing Manager, BlueChilli**

Networking in-person provides great opportunity for human connection that is unmatched by technology. Something magical happens when people are in a room together focusing on their shared interests. We're able to make eye contact, read body language and communicate more effectively. When we're in the same physical space as someone we're meeting for the first time, we receive non-verbal cues to confirm if our messages are being received, and we can adjust our message in real time for better understanding.

One of the main benefits of attending business events for networking purposes is the serendipitous meetings that occur frequently. You never know who you could meet when you arrive at the event, hover around food tables or are brave enough to strike up a conversation in the bathroom. Technology like event apps can create more chances to connect with like-minded people, but communicating via written messages or via phone takes time to create strong and personal connections.

### **Brad Giles, founder of Evolution Partners and author of Made to Thrive**

The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer, a study of 33,000 people across 25 countries, stated that for CEOs the number one job is building trust in their company. It was more important than high quality products and services, business decisions reflecting company values and even profit.

A lack of trust in a CEO damages the business they represent. People begin to associate its negative perception of the leader's characteristics with the company as a whole. Therefore, people's trust in a business is dependent on its trust in the leader.

If you don't cultivate your relationships in an ambassadorial role, for example with face-to-face networking, it's unlikely people will find your business authentic, which may create a barrier to trust. A website with stock images and stock text purely designed to optimise SEO is just that, stock. Every time I come across a website like this it makes me wonder whether there are any real people in this company.

I suspect that I'm not alone when I say that I don't want to deal with a stock company. I want to deal with a company, supported by a leader that is honest and transparent in a way I can verify for myself if I want. I want to deal with companies I can trust.

### **Alan Manly, CEO of Group Colleges Australia and author of The Unlikely Entrepreneur**

International leaders have every opportunity to communicate electronically but interestingly enough they travel the globe to meet and greet each other. To get the full picture of what a person is like requires a face to face meeting. Networking comes in all shapes and sizes. Meetings between individuals, such as with the neighbours next door to big business deals all share similar follow up questions. What did they look like? How did they receive your message? These predictable questions will inevitably have the routine responses. They looked, followed by an assessment of appearance that describes the body language. They sat around, an interpretation of the mood follows, such as relaxed, stressed, or didn't say much, but you could tell they were or were not interested. This is obvious when you view videos of world leaders of showing a smile or a grimace when asked to sit or stand close to each other. Such pictures tell a thousand words and only a face to face meeting reveals these issues.

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