



(512) 731-6129 • jessica@hotdogpr.com • www.hotdogpr.com

Playing the Popularity Game: Networking

Networking is the single most effective and cheapest way to market your business or your band. The larger your circle of friends, the more likely it is that they will remember your name, what you do, and pass it along to four people they know. A night out with your social butterfly wings attached can have the highest rate of return on investment than any advertisement or website.

How to Prepare:

When you're ready, approach the situation like a sales opportunity. Dress your best and appropriate for the occasion. Bring business cards, easy-to-carry marketing collateral and practice a few easy conversation starters and how you casually package your business in conversation. Remember, there's no reason to be shy: Most people in any social situation wants to be tapped for interaction.

Go Party:

If you're a musician, schedule weekly or bi-weekly nights to go hang out at clubs where you want to play. Get to know different bands and club owners. Connecting with the scene will guarantee you more shows and more notoriety. Small business owners should be attending local business events, getting to know other small business owners. Who's your audience? Where does your audience hang out? It's as easy as that!

Fill Your Calendar with Extra Curricular Activities:

Hate the idea of stuffy networking events or forcing yourself to go out all the time? Fill your social calendar with community services projects, social interest groups (knitting anyone), and other 'friend' making opportunities. Networking is not unlike dating. You have to get yourself out there to make an impression.

What To Do When You Get to the Party:

Use Your Soft Sales Style:

It can be exhausting to get into a conversation with someone and wait until your opportunity to talk about what you do, but this always works.

1. Compliment or comment on someone's extraordinary drink/suit/shirt/dress/shoes/watch, etc . . . They dressed to impress too and love being complimented.
2. Tie the comment into a reason why you noticed. "Oh, I was looking for something like that just the other day! Where did you get that?"
3. Introduce yourself and ask what they do and start ACTIVE listening.

4. Ask them questions about what they do in a real, non-factious way.
5. When it's opportune, start talking about yourself and what you do using concise statements about your business. Hopefully, they'll be so interested, they'll ask you more questions.

You will certainly start hearing a lot of this: "Oh, I have a friend who loves that kind of music." Or "I'm actually looking for exactly what you're selling." Or "Have you ever been to this event? It's the perfect place for you." You'll be flooded with advice, referrals and new friends.

Start Keeping Score:

Like I said before, networking is a lot like dating, and she/he with the most digits at the end of the evening wins!

- Exchange business cards with everyone you meet or collect someone's email address.
- Make a note on the card of what you discussed with them so you remember what to reference when you follow-up with them.
- Throughout the event, cut your losses. If you feel like someone with whom you've started a conversation is draining your energy, move on.

Don't Wear the Lamp Shade:

Networking can be a ton of fun after you get used to the process of socializing to advance your business, but if you enjoy alcohol at these opportunities (or worse, need it to loosen up), watch yourself. You can easily build a bad reputation for yourself this way. Bad reps are hard to undo. Take it easy and leave if you feel an embarrassing moment coming on.

What to do Afterwards:

Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up:

The next day or two days later, follow-up with the people you met. Draft them a friendly email or call them if you built a great relationship with them. Reference what you talked about and follow-through with any advice or help you offered them first. If you were going to pass on a lead or give them any information, do it now, and they'll appreciate your proactiveness.

Maintain Your Popularity:

When your new contacts respond, keep in-touch. Send them information you come across that you think might interest them, basically – you're everyone's best friend now. The effort to keep that momentum up is minimal, but requires a little bit of organization. Organize your contacts somewhere and look at the list occasionally. Who haven't you talked to in a while? Give them a call to catch up, drop them an email, or schedule a lunch. If you're on the top of their mind, they're more likely to send work your way. 100% of your contacts are likely to spread the word about your business and best of all - it's free!