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Christopher D'Marco, CRS Partner, is currently consulting and training in **strategic planning, leadership, team building, and Lean Six Sigma** in Health Care, Manufacturing, and other industries.

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I Hate Networking!

by Angela Calzone

From the time I started my career journey 26 years ago until this very moment, I can tell you with every ounce of anxiety in my being that the word "networking" conjures up intimidating and exhaustive images for me - - entering a room alone not knowing anyone; making strenuous small talk with perfect strangers; practicing my dreaded elevator statement, of course, the balancing act between my beverage, the little plate with a few blocks of cheese and some carrot sticks on it, my business cards, the cocktail napkin, and now I have to shake somebody's hand?!

From the onset, I hated "networking." I wasn't ever in a traditional sales position so I didn't see the value or the point in putting myself through all of that discomfort. But as a young professional, it was apparent to me that when I examined the most successful people around me, they knew an awful lot of people. So I decided if networking was what it took to be successful, well then I'd simply have to choose not to be successful!

So I went on with my days, with my work, and with my life - - serving clients in a way that I'd want to be served, respecting vendors and their challenges, cooperating with media and appreciating their objectives, helping out co-workers whenever I could, enjoying my hobbies and the people who shared similar interests, putting myself through grad school and bonding with my classmates, volunteering for the causes I believed in and wherever I was, whatever I did, I was comfortable. AND I listened generously. I love to listen. And when I listened, I would hear a need that one person had in a particular sector in my life and knew that a person in another sector of life might be able to fill that need; so I'd connect them. That felt good; that felt purposeful. As my circle of friends, co-workers, colleagues, beneficiaries, and protégés expanded, listening generously allowed me to hear of opportunities not only for myself but opportunities for those whose lives, whose careers, whose professional development, whose companies and whose clients I came to genuinely care about. And I loved to connect people without any intention other than to witness the sparks that a connection ignites.

Tips for Networking Effectively



First Impressions Carry yourself confidently, dress professionally and speak clearly. Be aware of any nervous habits and try to ease them with reassuring self-talk. Don't be afraid to approach someone at an event and introduce yourself.

The Handshake

A solid handshake can also make a positive first impression. A handshake should not be limp, but firm without squeezing. With a solid grasp, maintain eye contact and smile.

Remembering Names is invaluable. If you have trouble remembering someone's name, note their business card or name tag or try to identify their defining characteristics.

For more networking tips, please visit the [Change & Response Blog](#).

I continued to live my life; and when I'd transition from one job to another (and there were plenty of times when I did that), I didn't need a resume and rarely needed a reference. When I got behind a cause whether it was creating women's initiative programs in many NJ companies or recognizing women of achievement, I never gave filling the room a second thought. When I had to attend functions for business, I'd never go to an event filled with strangers. I'd make sure of that - because I hate networking. I'd go and there would be people I liked, people I cared about, people who introduced me to people they liked and cared about and I would do the same for them.

When younger colleagues were asked to "network", I knew how much I hated networking so I'd never let them go alone. I'd offer to join them or encourage them to bring a friend; because I knew that networking was just so uncomfortable.

Then about 10 years ago, I get the shock of my life when I was selected as an honoree for a prestigious leadership award. The honor itself wasn't the shock. I had worked hard, achieved a recognizable level of success and had begun to give back to my profession and my community. The shock came as I was working with the Awards Program Coordinator. Just out of sheer curiosity, I asked this young woman why she thought I was selected as an honoree and without missing a beat, she replied, "Ms. Calzone - nobody networks like you do."

Surely she's mistaken I thought. I hate networking.

Dare I say though, my "networking" has helped me weather crises, gain access, be enriched by knowledge, leverage opportunities and maintain relationships with some of the most amazing people in the universe. My success has been a gift from my network.

So it's okay if small talk isn't your forte or you haven't yet mastered your elevator statement. Find likeminded people whose presence you truly enjoy and let the networking begin.

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