Networking Tips and Tricks

Networking is an effective way for you to build your image and reputation. However, building a network can be a difficult thing for a lot of people. If you are inhibited at all, the idea of introducing yourself to people can be daunting. If you are outgoing, people may have the impression that you just want to meet them to further your career or grow your business. The real purpose of networking, however, is that you bring something that is helpful to them (not you specifically) without expecting something directly in return.

For example, if you know someone who needs their house painted, and you know a painter, you could introduce the two. You do not gain directly from the referral, except that now it’s possible that the person you refer and the painter will both think of you when they have a need or a referral for you.

There are plenty of networking groups available to help you get out into your community and to get known. Building a network takes time and patience. If you are hoping to get business or recognition from a group, expect it to take a year or more. Your results will depend on how involved you are.

Here are some excellent tips to try as you start to build or expand upon your network:

* If you are a strong writer or teacher, you can write for a variety of media (such as local news, websites, and blogs). Just make sure your work is getting read and that it’s work you are proud of.
* If you enjoy presentations, then volunteer to sit on a panel or start looking for paid workshops and conference presentations.
* Get away from time wasters, such as water cooler gossip, or people who socialize excessively at work and are not getting things done. You don’t want to be associated with these people because they will not be a good reflection of your values.
* Spend time with mentors and coaches in the workplace that you can learn from, even if it’s just while sharing a meal or break together now and again.