

# How to run a fantastic networking meeting: the recipe for success

By Jackie Barrie of Comms Plus

## Ingredients

- Display materials such as signage, posters or pop-up banner
- Invitations, printed or email
- Name badges for attendees
- Dynamic chairman
- Well-delegated committee of eager volunteers
- Regular members, shapes and sizes not important (every member is an essential ingredient, but on days when a particular individual can't attend, they should be substituted by someone else)
- Visitors

## Preparation

Find a good venue with nice, helpful staff. It must be conveniently located for local business people to reach, and have all the usual facilities, such as plenty of parking. It may also serve tasty refreshments at a reasonable price.

Gently blend chairman with committee, to ensure all tasks are undertaken by people with the right levels of commitment and ability.

Mix in a constant stream of guests to keep the group alive. Potential visitors are all around even though some people may think they're as rare as truffles. Offer incentives as a reward and 'thank you' to anyone who brings a guest that joins.

*Hint: New members are at their most enthusiastic; they've just made a commitment to join and will be likely to justify their rationale to others. You can build on this by encouraging new members to bring guests along.*

## **Method**

On the day, use your display materials to 'brand' the room – people need to know they are attending a professional event.

Set up a 'reception desk', recording attendance and issuing name badges so everyone knows who is whom.

*Hint: Wear name badges on the right-hand side so they are in the natural line of sight when people shake hands.*

Nominate a few smiley visitor hosts to seek out and welcome guests. The hosts should tell each guest what they can expect from the meeting, introduce them to anyone who may be of interest, and make sure they enjoy the event.

*Hint: Remember to follow-up all visitors by asking for feedback to guide your group's growth, and offering an invitation to join if they fit the group's criteria.*

Throw in a series of entertaining, informative and enlightening presentations so attendees get added value (optional).

Sprinkle with a big dose of humour.

Add a number of quality referrals and leave to simmer.

Before serving, top with a handful of serial networkers as they are the greatest givers, have the widest networks, can make more connections, and bring the most referrals to the meeting. If you can impress them and persuade them to join, they also get the most out of their membership.

*Hint: You'll probably find them out networking!*

Cook at room temperature until done.

### **About the Author**

As well as running a range of successful events, Jackie Barrie has been Area Partner for six different breakfast networking groups for Business Referral Exchange (BRX), and Co-moderator of Croydon Ecademy (evening networking). Although she provides traditional marketing services for her clients, she gets 98% of her own business through word-of-mouth marketing (networking).

### **For more information**

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