

## **Networking – the protocol!**

So, you have been to an event and handed out your business card to some interesting and potentially lucrative contacts, what next?

**Do I follow up immediately and what do I say?**

**Do I add the details to my database?**

**Do I file the card until I need it?**

Nicole Martin of Pinpoint Marketing Consultancy Ltd, gives you the pro's and con's! Filing the card away until you need it is an option, but not a very proactive option. The aim of networking is to make new contacts. These contacts may be potential customers, or they may also be the middleman between you and a potential customer. There might not be an immediate connection or an immediate opportunity to do business together, which is all the more reason to maintain contact and to keep yourself in the forefront of your contact's mind. Networking is often about playing the long game.

By adding the contact to your database, you will remember or automatically include the contact in future email, letter or telephone based campaigns that you run. Remember to note on your database where you met them. This will help you analyse all your sources of advertising and selling and which ones generate the most number of leads and revenue.

The best option is to follow up by email, letter or phone within a day or two of the event. Will this be seen as pushy? I say no. Attendees of networking events are there for the same reason as you. They want to meet like-minded business people and to find new customers. When you do make contact, say something along the lines of it was good to meet with you yesterday and I think there are some good opportunities for us to work together in the future. Also ask their permission to include them in any future marketing campaigns you may run. By doing this, you have instantly reminded them of meeting you, you have appeared organised, polite and professional and you will have got their permission to keep their details and liase with them in the future to hopefully turn them into a lead and then eventually a customer!

A final thought, a cardinal sin of networking is to make a promise to follow up to a contact with information, a lead, or just to say hello and then to not do this - a major faux-pas!

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**Pinpoint Marketing Consultancy Ltd**

07523 569288

info@pinpointmarketingconsultancy.co.uk

[www.pinpointmarketingconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.pinpointmarketingconsultancy.co.uk)



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