



Mastering the Art of Networking

Over the past few years, we've created opportunities in Toronto for financial professionals to connect and grow their networks. Feedback from these events has highlighted the importance of understanding the fundamentals of networking, as outlined in *Networking Like a Pro* by Ivan Misner and Brian Hilliard.

Common Misconceptions

Many people attend Finpro events hoping to sell their products or services. While this is a common goal, immediate sales are rare. Networking is not about making quick transactions—it's about building and nurturing relationships that are mutually beneficial. Through networking, you can expand your connections. Some contacts may become customers, while others may introduce you to industry experts, accountants, or lawyers who can support your business in different ways.

Building Effective Relationships

As your network grows, your business becomes stronger and more profitable, but success takes time. New customers often come not from immediate contacts, but through referrals from relationships you've carefully cultivated. Forming meaningful connections with fellow professionals is essential.

Simply attending events and exchanging business cards is just the beginning. Effective networking means regularly participating in events, following up with new contacts to learn



about their businesses and aspirations, maintaining relationships with existing connections, and offering referrals or information. By consistently investing in these relationships, you'll eventually see lasting returns.

The Power of Diversity

The most effective networking groups reflect the diversity of the community, with members of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and professional backgrounds. At Finpro, we strive to expand the professional backgrounds of our participants. We partner with organizations like AFP to bring in treasury professionals from Canadian corporates, engage with exchanges to invite equity market participants, and work with brokers and banks to include those from fixed income, commodities, and currency markets. We also welcome professionals from marketing, technology, and human resources. Our goal is to unite the entire financial professional community.

The Great Disconnect

A common disconnect in networking is the gap between a person's desire to sell at an event and the attendees' desire to buy. Networking is not face-to-face cold calling. Instead, it's about developing relationships for long-term success. Sometimes you attend an event to increase your visibility, sometimes to establish credibility, and sometimes to meet a referral partner. A true networking master understands that events are about moving through the process, not closing deals.

Networking is not about transactions—it's about relationships. It works best when you strive to make connections that lead to professional contacts. It does not work well when you attend just to make a sale.

Asking the Right Questions

When meeting people for the first time, ask questions that encourage them to talk about their business:

- Who is your target market?
- What do you enjoy most about your work?
- What's new in your industry?
- What challenges are you facing?
- What inspired you to choose your profession?

Measuring Networking Success

Networking doesn't yield instant, easily measurable results like cold calling or mass mailings. Its benefits unfold over time, much like harvesting fruit from an orchard that started as a seed. The true payoff comes after persistent effort leads to a robust referral network.

Tools like a Network Scorecard can help track your outreach and engagement. One of the most telling metrics is the number of follow-up meetings (such as coffee connections) you have with new contacts. Without follow-up, a contact remains just an acquaintance—there will be no business or referrals without ongoing engagement.

When meeting potential contacts, schedule one-to-one conversations aimed at understanding their work and exploring ways to help them. Focus these meetings on relationship-building, not selling. The foundation for strong business relationships is always supporting others first.

The Value of Social Capital

Social capital consists of resources built through social interactions—ideas, knowledge, opportunities, contacts, referrals, trust, and goodwill. Networking is a primary way to acquire social capital by building solid professional relationships.

By attending networking events, you develop trust and friendships, share referrals, contribute expertise, and enhance your skills. You also break out of isolation, which can hinder business growth. Social capital is both earned and spent, and helping others returns benefits over time in unexpected ways.

Lasting relationships—not just numerous contacts—are the key to a powerful network. Deepening your connections makes others more likely to support you in the future. Social capital is the international currency of networking. Nurture it as you would financial capital, and the rewards will multiply your material success.

Reciprocity and Networking

Reciprocity is central to relationship networking but is often misunderstood. “Givers gain” doesn't mean every act of generosity is instantly rewarded. Instead, giving should be without expectation of immediate return.

In networking, the law of reciprocity is the principle that helping others will, over time and through your network, come back to you in various ways. The person who helps you may not be the one you helped, and the benefits may take time to return.

To apply the law of reciprocity:

- Help others achieve success.
- Don't expect immediate reciprocation from the same individual.
- Track your contributions and involvement.
- Recognize that sustained engagement leads to results.

Success in networking is rooted in active involvement, generosity, and patience.

Actionable Takeaways:

- Focus on building relationships, not making immediate sales.
- Attend diverse events and follow up with new contacts.
- Ask thoughtful questions to understand others' businesses.
- Track your networking activities and measure success over time.
- Invest in social capital and practice generosity without expectation.