

# Networking Nightmares

by  
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# Introduction

When the average home business owner works till the early hours of the morning, alone and isolated with only forum buddies for company, it's not long before a change in perspective occurs.

Formerly sociable people who worked happily in a bustling office begin to enjoy the solitude and come to rely on it. The idea of meeting clients or colleagues in person begins to sound unappealing or even like an ordeal.

Antipathy towards exchanging the computer for real people, even for a few hours, is strong.



If any of this sounds familiar then it's time to sit up and take notice of the fact that exhibitions, conferences, seminars, focus groups and workshops are everywhere. And in the internet marketing (IM) world, they've never been more popular.

More recently, an almost **MIRACULOUS** trend has been taking place.

Event organisers and regular attendees have begun to observe a definite connection between the business success of an individual and their willingness to attend IM events. People who have been struggling to get their home business off the ground have turned things around within months – or even weeks – of attending an IM seminar or workshop.

If at this point, you find yourself mentally 'switching off' or guiding the mouse to the 'x', **ask yourself why this is.**

Whatever your circumstances or social preferences, meeting people face to face affords you an advantage. Resisting these opportunities because you **MIGHT** be able to manage without them is **backward thinking** and calls into question your commitment to making your business work.

IM events will open up possibilities you never even imagined, so get ready to witness the miracle for yourself.

# Reality Check

In the internet marketing niche, seminars or workshops are the most common type of event.

If you're looking to learn, then pay attention to who will be speaking and the topics that will be covered. Seminars are often annual events, so ask at your favourite forum for recommendations or look out for recommendations from your favourite guru.

If a seminar is going to provide high quality and content laden lectures, then expect to pay a good sum (anything from five hundred dollars to several thousand) to attend.

If the cost to attend a seminar is low or even free then be aware that the organisers are probably expecting to recoup their costs by pitching their products and services to the audience.

This doesn't mean the event isn't worthwhile (quite the opposite), but just be prepared that a pitch will take place at some point and that the organisers also have a business to run.

Additionally, and **this is crucial**, try and temper your cynicism about any offers being made to you. Don't purchase something you can't afford, but be open to the possibility that the offers made to you can be hundreds of dollars cheaper than if you'd purchased them elsewhere.



## **\*\* WARNING \*\***

Beware of events that are arranged by an organisation pedalling a very specific product or biz-op. They may promise an impressive array of lectures but, if their purpose is to encourage you to invest in an expensive product or service, the information presented may be self-serving, inaccurate and misleading.

Research your chosen event carefully.

# An Unadvertised Bonus

Whatever kind of event you attend, the residual benefit that is **ALWAYS** present, is the opportunity to network with other attendees.

Meal times, coffee breaks and the evening period after the event are all **OPPORTUNITIES** for meeting others in your field and building relationships.

The benefit from this 'unadvertised bonus' can often be equal to, or even greater, than the knowledge you acquire from the lectures.

Your brain keeps a section specifically for remembering faces. Meeting someone and conversing face to face creates brain activity that can never happen with an email, a forum post, or even a telephone conversation.

No matter how much you can achieve with technical methods, a real world meeting is more memorable and allows people to put a face to your name and, significantly, your business.

REAL network marketing is nothing to do with MLM or biz-ops. It's about making contacts, building relationships with REAL business owners and dragging each other along the road to success.



People you know loosely from email conversations or forum discussions can become three dimensional beings and the likelihood of developing a mutually beneficial relationship increases.

Talk to any proponent of offline events and they'll tell you about the valuable business relationships they've struck up with people they'd never even met before a chance encounter during a networking session.

Consider this...

Have you ever noticed how many product launches have two (or even three) names at the bottom of the sales letter?

**This Is NOT a Coincidence**

Working with one or more people greatly increases your ability to put a project together and the speed with which you can do it. Often, these partnerships, that you're unwittingly observing day after day, were forged after a meeting at an IM event.

If you're not already attending or planning to attend an event, you should be doing so **ASAP**.

In fact, the real **MARKETING MIRACLE** is why more aspiring entrepreneurs don't attend events; most coming up with a myriad of reasons for not attending.

Or if they do attend, they arrive late and leave early, missing out on the opportunities to meet people.



The – often unspoken – reason why people avoid IM events is simply because the idea of meeting and talking to strangers can be nerve-racking.

As human beings we tend to fear the unknown and the idea of travelling to, and attending, an event alone, can inspire a great deal of anxiety.

People who sound confident in emails and forum posts may, in real life, be painfully shy. This, above all, may be the main reason why many choose to miss out.

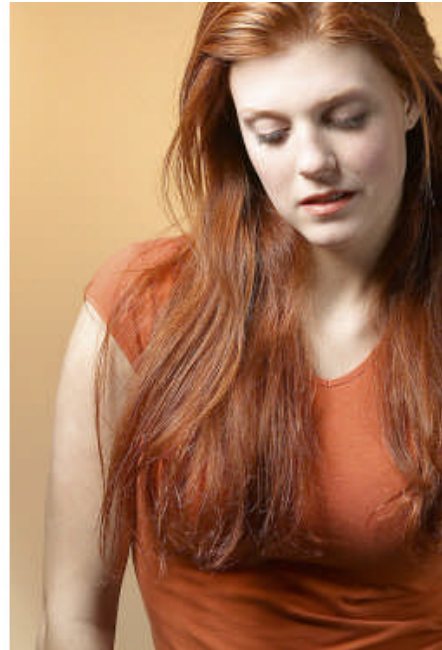
In the next chapter, we'll take an in-depth look at networking, and how to reduce your anxiety to the point where you are ready to take the plunge!

## Before You Arrive

Anthropophobia is the phobia of people. If even the thought of attending a networking event and meeting strangers gives you heart palpitations and leaves you nauseous then don't worry, it's unlikely that you have this phobia.

When confronted with their worst fears, a genuine phobic will often have a full-blown anxiety attack. It's far more likely that your problem is that of shyness or, even more likely, a simple fear of the unknown.

Most people – unless their self-confidence is very strong – will feel, at the very least, uncomfortable when placed in an unfamiliar setting with unfamiliar people. We feel unsure of what to do or say and we compound it by worrying that other people will notice our discomfort.



People often make excuses as to why they can't attend off-line events such as seminars or workshops. It's easy to pass off these justifications as evidence that someone is not serious about their business.

But it's far more likely that the individual is simply nervous about placing themselves in an unfamiliar environment.

The purpose of this chapter is to help you confront and overcome these fears by de-mystifying what you can expect to find when you arrive at an off-line event.

I'll also make some suggestions that will help make it easier to converse with people when you get there.

### Preparation

The more prepared you are for your trip, the more comfortable you'll feel.

Remember to pack the obvious items such as pens and paper for taking notes.

Make sure your transport arrangements are finalised and that you have maps of your destination as well as directions. Print off some Google Maps to supplement what the organiser has provided.

Take a contact number for the organisers with you. If you arrive at your destination but struggle to follow the directions to the exact location, one phone call can solve the problem.

If possible arrange to meet someone that you already know **BEFORE** you get to the venue. You will likely feel more comfortable arriving with someone familiar at hand. Just be careful not to turn this into an excuse not to talk to new people.

Most events don't have a specific dress code so some will turn up in casual gear while others will turn up in business attire. Choose clothing that you will be comfortable in (you'll be doing a lot of sitting) but that, at the same time, reflect the impression you want to convey.

If the seminar is over more than one day, take a mixture of clothing so you can adapt to the mood of the event.

If there is anything else you want to know before you attend, don't be afraid to ask the organisers for more information.

## **Business Cards**

To enable people to keep in touch with you after the event, make sure you get a good supply of business cards to take with you. They don't have to be fancy, as long as they contain your name, email address and web address.



Do be wary, however, of websites that offer free business cards as the quality is often very poor. A lot of people at your event will be giving out business cards that are paper-thin or printed at home so, if you get some decent business cards printed, this is an easy way to stand out.

You can tell a good quality business card by the weight. 335gsm is reasonable; 400gsm or more is preferable.



## On The Day

Entering a strange building can be a great source of anxiety but, remember, the majority of people who are attending will also be unfamiliar with their surroundings. There is a strong likelihood that the organisers will have placed something - or someone - in the entrance area to direct you.

If there is a reception area, ask to be directed to the <name of event>. Otherwise, look for signs or directions.

Usually there will be some time before the event begins to get a drink and meet some of the other attendees. Commit to leaping that first hurdle of meeting some people now and you will enjoy the rest of your day that much more.

### Meeting People

Guaranteed, there will be at least one attendee who is extremely gregarious and will talk to every single person there. If they take the opportunity to talk to you when you arrive, then be grateful for the fact that they've made the start of your day that much easier.

Otherwise, you're going to have to take the initiative.

If you're especially nervous, arrive at the venue as early as possible. If you're the first to arrive, then just introduce yourself to the next person along. If there are one or two people who are there before you, then you have a simple choice of who to go and speak to. The fewer people there are in the room when you arrive, the less intimidated you will feel.

If the venue is already quite full when you get there – don't panic.

If it's available, get a drink and familiarise yourself with the environment. Then decide who you are going to talk to. Any of the following options will do just fine.



**1)** Look for a person sitting alone, anxiously sipping at their drink. Congratulations, you've just found someone who is more anxious than you are. You cannot begin to imagine how grateful they will be to the person who walks over, introduces themselves and then sits down. Under those conditions, there is no reason why you should feel intimidated.

**2)** Look for a group of three or more people with little or no conversation (two people alone may be deep in discussion but you should be able to get a sense if the conversation is casual).

Walk over and say, 'You don't mind if I join you, do you?'. One of the group will quickly indicate that this is ok and this is your cue to introduce yourself to the group and shake some hands.

Try and quell your nerves sufficiently to pay attention and remember their names (some events will provide everyone with name tags).

**3)** Look for a group of three or more people having an enthusiastic discussion.

Depending on the circumstances, you can either ask if it's ok to sit down (as above), or simply sit quietly and listen to the conversation.

Once you have a handle on what the conversation is about, look for an opportunity to join in. If you can't think of anything interesting to contribute then identify the person who is speaking the most and, at a suitable juncture in the conversation, ask a relevant question. The



chatterbox will be thrilled at the opportunity to talk some more and will likely be flattered that you're interested in their opinion.

If an opportunity to introduce yourself to the group as a whole (or, perhaps, just the person you're sitting next to) presents itself – take it.

## **Widen Out**

To make the event worthwhile, you need to speak to as many people as possible.

If you find someone you feel comfortable chatting to early on, don't fall into the trap of focussing on that individual for the rest of the day. By all means cultivate that friendship as it could easily develop into a valuable business relationship, but force yourself to meet other people as well.

When you move from the refreshment area to the main venue, or from the main venue to the lunch room, make a point of sitting next to someone you haven't spoken to yet.

## **Conversation**

This is the stumbling block for most people. The age of text messages, emails, forums and chat rooms has killed the art of conversation and the fear of awkward silences is common.

Here are a few tips for starting and maintaining a conversation.

Talking to someone you don't know should, in theory, be the easiest kind of conversation. Since you know virtually nothing about the person, then there is an abundance of things you can ask about.

The mistake a lot of people make is thinking that conversation means that you have to be able to say interesting things. In reality, the best conversationalist is the one that takes a genuine interest in other people.

After introducing yourself, simply ask a few questions designed to get the other person talking. As long as your questions are friendly and genuine (not an interrogation), most people will be pleased that someone is interested in what they have to say.

For example:

- Whereabouts are you from?
- Have you had far to travel?
- Have you attended this event before?
- What kind of business/website do you have (key question)?

- What made you decide to attend?
- Which speaker are you most looking forward to?

Once you've got someone talking, listen carefully to what they have to say and look for areas of common interest to expand the conversation. For example, if you are both working on building your mailing list, this is a good area to explore and about which to share ideas.

When people ask you about your business, figure out a way to condense a description into 15-30 seconds. Practice it on someone who doesn't know about your business to make sure it is understandable.

If the person is interested in what you do, they will ask questions; otherwise avoid the temptation to go on and on (unless you want to be labelled as a bore).

Save discussion about YOUR business for someone who is asking about it. The person who asks you questions is GENUINELY interested in what you do.

Otherwise you are far better using your time to find out what other people are doing to see if there is some of kind mutual interest or direction.

Even better, if there is something you can offer (as a favour, this is not the place for practicing your sales pitch) that will help them get to where they want to be, then this is a great opportunity to make a friend.

When you do a favour for someone - no matter how small - the person will likely be open to returning that favour (ie – perhaps accepting a JV request), weeks or even months later.

Offering to help others at this juncture, is far more effective than asking for a favour within minutes of meeting someone.

# IM Myths De-Bunked

I would guess that, at least some of the above sounds incredibly condescending. I mean, hey, you're a human being, you know how to talk, right?

So then what's keeping you from attending an offline event?

It's not price – Some workshops are free or just a few dollars to attend.

It's not travel – There's a good chance that a networking event is taking place in the next 12 months near to where you live and, even if some travel is required, unless you're house-bound, this shouldn't be a barrier.

It's not anxiety – Unless you're genuinely phobic, then you can overcome your fears by assimilating the above.

So what is it?

Here are a few IM event myths that I'm pleased to de-bunk:

***Myth: Everyone at the event is making a fortune and I can barely cover my hosting bill. I'll be a laughing stock.***

Most people attending the event will have a day job and be building their own business in the evening and on weekends. **NO-ONE** worthwhile will look down on you because you're still on your way up.

Actually, if you're struggling to make any significant income, then you are the person who is **MOST LIKELY** to benefit from attending an event.

***Myth: It'll be a pitch-fest.***

Most pitching takes place at the conclusion of a lecture and it certainly doesn't de-value the information you received leading up to it.

And if you think of it as a pitch, then you need to re-adjust your thinking.

Change the word 'pitch' to 'valuable products and resources, with heavily discounted prices that I won't get anywhere else'.

And no-one will force you to buy **ANYTHING**.

***Myth: I won't learn anything that I can't learn for free elsewhere.***

Please, please, please get that **RIDICULOUS** perception out of your head as soon as you can.

Some of the speakers save their most valuable nuggets of information for seminars and much of it will have its maximum relevancy NOW. By the time it's filtered down to the free ezines and forums, it'll be watered down and lost among the mass of junk information.

By the time you hear it, even if you recognise its worth without a speaker to show you specific examples and data, its efficacy may have already been reduced.

And if you want to get the real marketing DIAMONDS, talk to the speakers in-between sessions and especially in the evening. You might just learn things that they're not willing to reveal on the internet, or even during a lecture.

***Myth: It'll be boring.***

I've actually never heard someone make this excuse, but I put it in so I could take the opportunity to point out that these events are **TREMENDOUS FUN**.

The lectures are frequently lively and entertaining. The people are all enthusiastic about IM and, perhaps for the first time in your life, you'll be able to talk enthusiastically about the industry without having to stop and explain the words you're using.

By the end of the event, your brain will be buzzing with new ideas and new techniques you want to try.

I can virtually guarantee that you won't be able to wait until the next one.

***Myth: I'll be able to buy the seminar on DVD eventually anyway.***

The above two sections provide a suitable response to this myth, but I will also add in the fact that watching from home takes away the opportunity to **NETWORK**.

In case it hasn't sunk in yet...

**At least half of the value of an IM event is the opportunity to network with other home business owners.**

If you're still resistant when it comes to IM events, then it's probably without good reason. In fact, if there is a good reason that I can't think of, then I'd love to hear it. You can email me at [david@thenettle.com](mailto:david@thenettle.com).

If you can't think of a reason, then it's time to stop 'thinking about it' and just **GO AND DO IT**.

Ask around at your favourite forum and find a recommended event. If possible, register NOW so you are committed to going – then make your plans to attend.

Networking in the real world may seem like a nightmare now but, after the event, you'll wonder what you were worried about and why you didn't try it sooner.

