

The Writer's E-Zine Home

The Business of Writing

Rhonda Bracey

Top Tips For Nurturing Your Network

"Forget injuries, never forget kindness." — Confucius

"What goes around, comes around." Networking is not just about using your contacts for your own (business) purposes. A lot of reciprocation is involved as well — to the extent that you give more than you receive. In my opinion, karma is a powerful force. Even if you are not directly giving to those in your circle, the fact that you are giving somewhere is important.

There are some very simple things that freelance and contract writers can do to nurture their networks.

1. Maintain contact with people you know.
2. Go out of your way to help people.
3. Do your best at each job or activity; be professional, courteous, honest, and thorough. Build yourself a reputation of excellence.
4. Make no enemies. Some industries and groups are very close-knit. You never know who is part of someone else's network, so there's a reasonable chance that the person you bad-mouth is known to your contact. It's a very small world.
5. Watch your approach. Don't be aggressive, egomaniacal, or obnoxious in your networking or else you will alienate people (read: potential employers). Follow the mantra of all writers: Know your audience. There may be a time and place for aggressive marketing of your services, but a social situation is probably not it. If you are in any doubt, take the subtle approach.
6. Follow up all leads, and always thank those who have helped you. Depending on the degree of help given and the relationship you have with your contact, the "thanks" could be verbal, a note sent by e-mail or regular mail, or a small gift. For those who helped you in a major way and who you know wouldn't be offended or embarrassed by it, perhaps a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates, a bottle of wine, or dinner in a nice restaurant.
7. Mentor others, especially those who are new to your profession or group. Not only do you help them, but you also will learn a lot from them.
8. Remember others. If you see an article or something that might be of interest to a past client or a member of your network, forward it to them with a brief note. It shows that you are thinking of them. Working on the principle of reciprocation and keeping your name in front of them, it may mean that when they require some help, they will call on you.
9. Let others know you admire them or their work. If you admire someone, or the way they have gone about doing something, tell them! Everyone needs a boost to their ego every so often, and it promotes

their self-confidence. It also means that they think favorably of you, which can have positive reciprocal effects. (Just make sure your praise is genuine. Most people can spot a phony, and if you're tagged as one, it can be difficult to change the perception.)

10. Trust your instincts. Trust is an essential part of networking — you will be getting to know another person well enough to be able to find some common ground. But there will be people who you don't like on first meeting. If so, fine — move on. Chances are, if you don't like them, then neither of you will be good for each other; the trust won't be there, and one or both of you will get burned by the relationship.

About the Author:

Rhonda Bracey owns her own technical writing company, [CyberText Consulting Pty Ltd](http://www.cybertext.com.au), based in Perth, Western Australia. She works as a contract technical writer for many companies, mostly doing software documentation and online help. Prior to getting into technical writing, Rhonda was a high school Deputy Principal and Head of Department: Library for many years. Contact: [Rhonda.bracey@cybertext.com.au](mailto:bracey@cybertext.com.au) or <http://www.cybertext.com.au>

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