

# Networking Strategies

Making Connections to Further  
Your Sales Success

*Excerpts from articles and  
training sessions conducted  
by Mark Hunter with  
additional commentary  
from his  
Sales Motivation Blog  
and Sales Hunting Tip  
emails*



**Mark Hunter**

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**The Sales  
Hunter**

[www.TheSalesHunter.com](http://www.TheSalesHunter.com)

## *Author: Mark Hunter, "The Sales Hunter"*

Mark Hunter, "The Sales Hunter," helps individuals and companies identify better prospects, close more sales, and profitably build more long-term customer relationships. He is a consultative selling expert, specializing in custom-tailored sales programs that allow businesses to gain the edge they need to compete and win in today's marketplace. His client list includes British Petroleum, Godiva, Amerisource Bergen, Mattel Toys, Unilever, Sara Lee Bakery Group, and Borsheim's. As a keynote speaker, he is best known for his ability to motivate and move an organization through his high-energy presentations. To find out more about Mark's selling philosophy, you can visit his website at [www.TheSalesHunter.com](http://www.TheSalesHunter.com) or his Sales Motivation Blog at [www.TheSalesHunter.com/blog](http://www.TheSalesHunter.com/blog).



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*If you'd like to invite Mark to participate in your next sales meeting, you may contact him at the email address or phone number listed below.*

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## Networking is a “Con” Game

Networking is nothing more than a “con” game. Have you ever been contacted by some swindler offering you money if you would help out a long, lost relative located in a remote country? We all know calls like these are scams. But, in sales, can we associate the necessary skill of networking with a “con”? I believe we can and should.

Now, I’m not suggesting that networking is a sleazy activity. Networking is a “con” game because the letters “con” are critical reminders of how to be successful in this endeavor. Instead of associating “con” with its negative connotation, I’d like to suggest that you link “con” with the words **Continuity**, **Concern**, and **Confidence**. I call them the “**3 Cons of Networking**.” The need to display each of these is at the core of every networking opportunity whether we realize it or not.

To emphasize my point, stop for a moment and think about the people who you value knowing. Each one has communicated a sense of **continuity**, **concern**, and **confidence** towards you. In the same regard, people who have you in their network have come to see these same three “cons” in you. Many times, unfortunately, we don’t realize this so we are unable to leverage the “**3 Cons**” to increase the value of our network.

*Think about the people who you value knowing. Each one has communicated a sense of continuity, concern, and confidence towards you.*

Let’s break down each of the “**3 Cons of Networking**” and examine some ways we can use them to our advantage:

The first “**Con**” is **Continuity** and it serves as the foundation of networking. Do not assume continuity requires you to have face to face meetings on a regular basis with the person you’re associating with. Rather, continuity means that you have contact with the other person at a frequency that can be counted on. Although this implies regularity, it just means the contact that takes place has to occur at a rate that is natural to both parties. Besides getting together in person, it can be made by mail, e-mail, telephone, or even a fax. The rate of recurrence will control the speed and depth of the networking relationship. If you want to be better connected with someone, identify the type of contact which best suits that person and seek to get in touch with them on an appropriate schedule.

The second “**Con**” is **Concern**. Do you show concern for the other person? Are you willing to go out of your way to assist them? Many people desire to network with others for nothing more than building a list of names, as if they were collecting baseballs cards or old coins. In reality, networking is about making a difference in the lives of others. It’s about being willing to put their needs in front of your own. You do this by showing interest in them, by asking them questions, by helping them achieve their goals, by congratulating them for things they’ve accomplished, and by being will to share their success with others. Although this “**Con**” is the most critical, it is also the most often neglected in society today.

The final “**Con**” is **Confidence**. Under no circumstance should this be associated with arrogance. It’s not as much about your level of self-assurance as it is about the amount of confidence the other person has in you. Think about it. If you aren’t confident in somebody, you won’t confide in them, you won’t support them, and you probably will not go out of your way for them. The person who others have confidence in is respected.

How do you gain the confidence of those in your network? Demonstrate **Continuity** and **Concern**. (You might say confidence is the end result of doing the other two well.) Be knowledgeable and professional with the other person. Be willing to put yourself into situations where they can see how you respond to things in both good and bad times. Commit to be yourself regardless of who you're with or who you desire to meet. Turning these actions into habits will help you gain the respect and confidence you desire from your counterparts.

Networking is a "con" game, nothing more and nothing less. When you are willing to invest time into carrying out the "**3 Cons**," you will find your network growing not just in size, but, more importantly, in the value and benefits you and those you network with receive from it. Successful networking relationships have "con" written all over them!

*When you are willing to invest time into carrying out the "3 Cons," you will find your network growing not just in size, but, more importantly, in the value and benefits you and those you network with receive from it.*

## 21 Tips to Use at a Networking Event

When you arrive at a networking event, avoid gravitating to people you know. You should initially thank the host and then immediately find someone new to introduce yourself to. This will help keep you in the right frame of mind as to why you came.

1. Stop selling and start listening! When you meet someone for the first time, use it as an opportunity to get to know them. Don't try to sell them anything. Rather, begin to establish a relationship.
2. Keep your business cards in the breast pocket of your coat, a shirt pocket, or in an outside pocket of your purse so they are easy to access and in good condition.
3. When giving a person your card, personalize it by hand writing your cell number on it. This will cause the recipient to feel that they are receiving something special.
4. When giving or receiving a business card, be especially careful when dealing with people from outside the US as many cultures treat them with very high regard.
5. When receiving a card from someone, take a moment to write yourself a note on it such as where you met. If you do this while you're still talking to the person, it will help convey your sense of personal connection.
6. During the course of a conversation, use the other person's first name two or three times. People always like to hear their own name and it will help you to remember it when the discussion is over.
7. Rather than telling a new contact all about yourself, spend your time asking them questions. It's amazing how much you'll learn!
8. After you meet someone for the first time, use the back of their business card to jot a note about something you learned from the conversation and the date and place you met them. Recording the information will give you something to talk to them about the next time you see them.
9. Connect with the person you're talking to by tilting your head as you listen to them. It is an effective

tive body language technique which communicates that you're paying attention to what they're saying.

10. When a person is talking to you, be sure to look directly at them. Giving a person full attention with your eyes will encourage them to share more.
11. Remember, however, that it's not a "stare-down" contest. Give the person 3 – 5 seconds of eye contact and then look away briefly before returning your focus to them again.
12. The best location to network is by a high-traffic area such as a main door, the bar, or near the food.
13. Never approach people if they're walking towards the restroom. Wait until they have returned to the networking area.
14. After the person has shared something with you, ask them another question about what they just said. This shows that you're paying attention and that you care about what they're telling you.
15. Always keep one hand free to allow yourself to shake hands with people. This means that you shouldn't eat and drink at the same time. But remember, this is a networking event, not a full-course meal.
16. As a way of demonstrating your networking skills, introduce each new person you meet to at least one other person.
17. Never try to barge into a group of 4 or more people. Come along side of the group, but do not attempt to enter into the discussion until you've made eye contact with everyone.
18. Do not approach two people who are talking, as you may be interrupting an important discussion.
19. It is best to initiate conversation with someone who is standing by themselves. They'll be happy to have someone to talk to them and, as a result, will many times open up with valuable information.
20. When you meet someone for the first time, you have 72 hours to follow up with them before they will completely forget about meeting you.

A networking event is not a time to see how many business cards you can acquire. Rather, it is a time to develop a few relationships that have potential.

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## Warren Buffet on Selling and Networking

I'm fortunate to call Omaha home. Warren Buffet is a fellow resident. Known for his investment expertise, he is, according to several reports, the richest person in the US and probably the world. What makes Warren so amazing is his patience in cultivating opportunities.

At this last annual shareholders' meeting, he talked about his upcoming trip to Europe to seek out potential investments. He made a comment that a key reason for his trip is to get the word out regarding what he looks for in making an investment. I found that very interesting. Here's the richest guy around with a highly publicized business strategy saying he needs to get the word out. Then it dawned on me that he's really talking about networking to build relationships that will ultimately create business opportunities.

If anyone thinks they don't need to network, stop and reconsider why Warren Buffet is going on his trip to Europe. Everyone in sales needs to network, no matter how big your current network is, no matter how well-known you believe your company's reputation might be. The need to network will never go away. Ask yourself who you are planning to meet with this week that will help you strengthen your network. Who can you meet with this week to help them build their network?

## Communication Tips

1. Make eye contact as a means of showing confidence and conviction.
2. Allow passion to come through your voice and body language.
3. Listen not only to the words that are spoken, but also to what is communicated through body language.
4. Use hand gestures and body language to support your spoken word.
5. Watch for obvious body language signals that either support or refute what the person is saying.
6. Listen for changes in the person's pitch, tone, or volume as either a buying signal or the emergence of an objection.
7. As a means to get the other party to share information, be comfortable enough in your conversation to allow them to believe they're in control.
8. Use the other person's first name several times during a conversation.
9. To help convey the message that you're paying close attention, tilt your head slightly when listening to someone speak.
10. End a conversation by giving the other person a compliment and repeating the key point of the discussion.

## Holiday Networking

The last 3 weeks in December are the best networking time of the year! Don't miss out! Many people think everything is shutting down about now and there's no sense in trying to develop new business. However, I find it the best time of year for one simple reason: you can reach many more people now that you can't reach

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at any other time of the year! Think about it. During the holidays, everyone's schedules get thrown into disarray and, as a result, they tend to do things that are out of the ordinary. For example, on my website, I have a number of articles, and every time there's a holiday weekend, the number of hits per page skyrocket! Why? People have time to explore things they normally don't get the time to do.

Your peak time for networking is between Christmas and New Year's. Yes, there are fewer people working during that time, but they are usually more receptive to answering the phone. People who are working that week are also many times catching up on things and laying the groundwork for next year. So, there's no better time for you to introduce yourself! Although it might mean you have to change your holiday plans, if networking during those days makes for a better 2009, then it's probably time well spent.

Now, don't set yourself up for failure by thinking you're going to connect with a particular person. Rather, use the next couple of weeks to reach out to as many people as possible via the telephone, email, or networking events. Cast your net as far and as wide as you can and you'll be amazed at the results. You'll be even more amazed when some of these contacts materialize into business next year.

## Referrals, The Lifeblood of a Successful Business

***Never pass up the opportunity to ask a customer if they can refer you to somebody else.***

Ask! At the conclusion of a meeting, never pass up the opportunity to ask a customer if they can refer you to somebody else. Furthermore, don't hesitate to request that they contact that person to introduce you. Too many times we only ask for referrals from a customer when things are going well. The result of this type of behavior is a missed chance to maximize the number of future opportunities you may have. It is imperative that anytime you have a conversation with a customer, you ask for a lead. Don't wait until they have placed an order with you.

On an existing customer's anniversary or birthday, be sure to send them a celebratory card or note of some type. At the bottom of it, add a hand-written message such as, "It's always a pleasure to serve you! If you know of others like yourself who might benefit from my services, feel free to let me know."

Whenever someone gives you a referral, be sure and keep them updated of your progress with that person. A phone call is always an appropriate means of saying thanks. You can even take it a step further by acknowledging their recommendation to you with a gift card of some type. The value is not as important as the gesture. Clients will be especially appreciative if your thank you is based solely on their "opening the door" for you, even if the referral does not ultimately become a customer.

In addition, it's important to establish a pattern of providing referrals to others. If you expect your customers to offer you referrals, then you need to willingly provide them with leads. Because it's easy to become focused on generating our own referrals, make it a habit of providing a specific number of leads to others each week, month, etc. However, do not expect each referral you give to result in one coming back to you. If you do, you'll never master the referral process. Remember that, in time, you will create an additional stream of referrals.

It is very important to immediately follow up with any lead that is given to you, no matter how insignificant it might seem. We often pass judgment as to the quality of the lead even before we've contacted them. Understand that the value of the lead is actually in our ability to demonstrate to the "giver" the importance you place on referrals. When they see this, they will many times respond by delivering even better ones to you.

Set a goal for yourself regarding the number of referrals you expect to generate each week, month, etc. When you do so, you'll be amazed with results, as you will build your time around achieving the goal. Develop relationships with people who are both influential and come in contact with a number of other people because they are the type who are most likely to generate contacts. However, when developing the relationship with them, remember that it is not all about you. Rather, it's all about how you can first help the other person.

Create a "referral month". Take one month each year when you blitz everybody in your contact list, asking them first how you can help them succeed in their business, goals, etc., and then requesting referrals. A great approach in doing this is to ask for a detailed explanation of their job description and how you might be able to provide referrals to them. Of course, the key is following through and providing these people with leads.

A great resource for referrals is small business owners. They are generally very sensitive as to how leads can impact a business. Remember, however, that referrals go both ways.

Whenever you are meeting with a customer to update their information, be sure to ask them if they know of others in a similar situation to theirs. Naturally they will, so it's appropriate to infer that the prospect could benefit from your services in the same way.

Seek out the ability to provide others with referrals who are not expecting them. When you meet somebody at a school meeting, or a neighborhood gathering provide people you meet in these types of non-business events with referrals. People who receive referrals from an event like this will automatically become sensitive to the person who gave them the referral.

Become a person of influence. People who have the ability to influence become people others want to connect with, and thus become very receptive to receiving and giving referrals.

Thank you notes and other hand-written letters of expression are a great way to stay in contact with others and they're a great tool that allows others know you're thinking of them. More importantly by taking the time to write people hand-written notes saying thanks will shape your own attitude and make yourself even more giving.

***People who have the ability to influence become people others want to connect with, and thus become very receptive to receiving and giving referrals.***

## The Value of Networking

Do you ever wonder if networking is really worth the time and effort? Keep in mind that the average person knows at least 100 other people. This means that if you network with 100 people, your network is really 10,000 strong. Who couldn't use 10,000 more contacts?

Around the year-end holidays is a great time to be updating and building your network. I've always found that in December people are more receptive to holding conversations, whether it be on the phone, in an e-mail, or in person. The peak time for this is actually the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. Take a moment to layout a plan to help you maximize your networking opportunities.

## The Power of Your Network

Long-term success does not come from one-time, single-shot sales. Long-term success in sales comes from what you do day in and day out and is impacted in a huge way by who you associate with. I've recently spent time with several different sales people and I've been amazed at how each of them view success and how they determine their goals. In each case, their frame of reference had a direct correlation on who they network with and the frame of reference the other people had. I hate to say it, but narrow-minded people have narrow-minded goals. Big thinkers have big goals.

I'm fortunate enough to have two kids (or I should say young adults as they are both in college). When they were little kids, we always monitored their friendships. As parents, this is natural because we wanted our kids to not be hanging out with others who were bent on causing trouble. In the same way, adults have to monitor who we allow ourselves to be influenced by. Is there any wonder why successful people associate with successful people?

A challenge I push myself to do is to ensure my network, my friends, and the people I come in contact with are big thinkers with big goals. The last thing I want to do is to be bogged down by people who could negatively impact my goals, the quality of my thinking, and, ultimately, what I accomplish.

***Ensure your network, friends, and the people you come in contact with a big thinkers with big goals.***

A final comment: I was just in a sales office where the entire sales team was having a blow-out month. It seemed as if everything they were touching was turning into a sale. In talking with them, they had a level of energy and drive that permeated every corner of their office and every corner of their brains. Great sales people were hanging out with great sales people.

## Networking in a Tough Economy

Networking is a key part of sales, and in a difficult economy, its role networking is even more important. In light of the current state of the market, remember to keep your comments and questions positive while networking. Avoid dwelling on the negative. It's very easy to get down on things when you're talking to someone who's having a tough time. On the flip side, people always enjoy talking to someone who is positive, especially when things aren't going well for them.

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## Mark Hunter

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For nearly 30 years, Mark Hunter has been in sales. The first 20 years, he worked for three Fortune 100 companies managing sales territories worth more than \$200 million in annual sales. Other roles included directing more than 200 sales people and \$700 million in annual sales. For the past 10 years, he has been a sales consultant who speaks and works with leading global companies. It's Mark's experience in key sales positions of top corporations that gives him the confidence to deal with CEOs and other senior-level people in today's corporate environment.

The experience Mark has had combined with his communication skills and keen sense of the industry make him a highly sought after sales speaker and sales consultant for corporations and associations. Since creating the brand, "The Sales Hunter," in 1998, he has had the privilege of speaking to and working with thousands of sales professionals and business leaders. His passion for sales combined with his engaging communication style make him a favorite presenter of numerous companies and associations. He is best known for his sales motivation speeches that not only educate the audience, but also leave them empowered to succeed.

"The Sales Hunter" provides wisdom, motivation, and inspiration every week to sales professionals around the globe. His insightful videos and podcasts are popular downloads on YouTube and iTunes, and he has been quoted in numerous magazines and newspapers. His free, weekly *Sales Hunting Tip* email is received by thousands of salespeople worldwide. Additionally, many of his articles on Sales have been reprinted in some of the industry's leading magazines and business websites.

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