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Womack Consulting
Group

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[THE ART OF NETWORKING]

Networking is an art because unlike a science, which follows a methodology, no two people will ever network the same way. However, there are some tips that can help you to become successful at surrounding yourself with like-minded professionals.

Thank you for subscribing to my blog and taking the time to read this eBook. Networking in our society is becoming an essential element in our quest for success. People need people to get things done. Certain segments of our society have been networking, sharing business contacts and secrets for years while other segments are just catching on. This book will reveal six keys to creating a strategy that will give you the confidence and ability to identify professionals that can help take your business to the next level.

Networking is just that – working. Networking is not a passive activity. When you go to a networking event, it is not a time to kick your feet up and relax. You should go with the mindset that you are about to do some work. Your focus whether communicating online or in person should be on connecting with like minded individuals that can help you build your personal and professional brand. I know that probably sounds a bit shallow so let's clear up one of the first misconceptions about networking – the people in your network are not meant to be your friends. Over time, you may build relationships with some of them that evolve into friendships; however, you should not be focused on finding friends rather professionals with similar interests.

In this eBook, I am going to share some strategies that have helped me to build my network. I must preface this by saying; by nature, I am shy and introverted. If I had my preferences, I could go days without speaking to anyone outside of my immediate family and friends. However, if you ask anyone that has ever seen me at a networking event, they would swear that I am lying. That is because to be successful it is essential that I step outside of my shell, meet people and build a strong network.

“Your network determines your net worth”



THE ART OF NETWORKING

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1. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO?

It never fails that people want to know, “What do you do?” Are you prepared to clearly explain what you do in 60 seconds or less? Merely providing your job title is not always enough. You have to be able to tell people what you DO so that they can determine whether a mutually beneficial relationship can be established.

If I tell someone that I am a Business Consultant, they usually stare blankly at me because the term is so broad until it can mean so many things. However, when I say, “I am Business Consultant and I help small business owners start or grow their business by providing seminars and one on one consultations” I usually get a follow-up like, “I’ve been thinking of starting a business” or “I have a friend that needs to talk to you.”

Obviously, the next step is to provide my business card and then get more information. You should be prepared to serve as a walking advertisement for your business everywhere that you go.

Within the past couple of years, I have come to the realization that I need a three-layer network. Therefore, when describing what I do, I have to be mindful of attracting professionals from all three groups.

1. **Potential employees/ Customers** – when networking within this group, you want to speak from a position of authority to garner their respect and establish yourself as someone capable of being in charge and getting the job done.
2. **Industry peers** – it is very important to spend some time networking with your peers because it allows you to stay abreast of what is happening within the industry, to see what is working for other companies and what isn’t. When networking with this group, seek opportunities for collaborations and information sharing. You can be a little more relaxed within this group because you’re not trying to sell anything.
3. **Industry leaders** – Although we all want to blaze the trail to success, having professionals within your network that have been there and done that can save you from making some costly business mistakes. You want to maintain your professionalism with this group because as a new kid on the block (no matter how much experience you have, you can’t beat them) you want to prove that you are worthy of them passing their knowledge on to you.



Disclaimer: don’t assume because someone is your friend that they should automatically do business with you, especially if your product/service is inferior to the competition. Building a solid network merely increases your probability of success. There are no guarantees.

ACTIVITY – PITCH ME...

Develop a 60-second commercial that gives people an idea of who you are and what you do.

There are three key elements to a successful introductory commercial –


1. **Who are you?** Always start by slowly and clearly pronouncing your name. Ideally, when attending networking events, you should wear a nametag because most people are horrible with names and they are often embarrassed to ask you to repeat your name.

2. **What do you do?** Make sure you provide your job title because it helps to establish your credibility and allows them to associate what they think you do with someone that they may already know. If you are in business for yourself or allowed to create your own title, make it something that easily correlates to what you do.

3. **Give them the WIIFM (what's in it for me).** Always close with how what you do is useful to the listener.

Make sure you keep it short, sweet and to the point because you want to provide enough information that the listener is prompted to start a conversation with you versus you just talking about yourself. By engaging in conversation, you can save on useless chatter and get to the point of how you can fill their need and center the conversation on those details.

Let's hear it... who are you, what do you do and how can you help me?



A large red speech bubble with a white interior, containing seven horizontal lines for writing a pitch. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the left.

2. IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

Most of us like to believe that a book should not be judged by its cover but the truth is, people notice how much effort you put into your image.

This isn't just your outfit but how well you take care of yourself, the quality of your marketing collateral and even the design and content of your online media. In today's society, there is so much competition that we often only get one chance to make a first impression. If that impression does not meet our prospects expectations, it's on to the next option.

When you attend networking events, you have to be polished from head to toe as well as have a clear and concise message because you are setting the standard for the type of businessperson you are. This also holds true for your online content and physical business location, if you have one.

If you have a lot of suggestive content on your Facebook page then it may be best to keep it private because people will make judgments about you and your business capabilities based on what they see, which may or may not be what they will get. I almost always Google people and companies before deciding to do business with them because I want to know what type of business or person I am attaching my name to and there are others who are doing the same.

It amazes me when I attend a networking event, start talking to someone and before the conversation is over, I have heard their entire life story. I am not sure if I should feel honored that they feel comfortable enough sharing so much with me or confused because I have no idea where the conversation is headed. There is a difference between being personable (approachable and easy to talk to) and personal (revealing details of your personal life). I am an advocate of having a public and private person. Your public person should be taken to work, networking events and professional gatherings while your private person hangs with your friends and family. There are some things that your public person should never say or do that your private person might do on a regular basis. Having this separation of person does not mean that you are not "keepin' it real." It does, however, mean that you understand that there are boundaries in life.




Networking requires that you be personable – someone that others feel comfortable approaching and engaging in conversation with. You should take some time before you go out to catch up on current events, even if it's just reading the latest headlines so that you have an awareness of what is happening in local and world news. Also, have about five standard small talk questions that you can use to start a conversation. They should be open-ended questions, ones that don't result in a yes or no answer, and should be an attempt to find common ground with the person you are engaging. Even if you don't share your life story with others, you can still leave a lasting and memorable impression as a good conversationalist.


ACTIVITY – CHECK YOURSELF

Does the image that others see match the image that you want to portray? Ask three people that you trust to be honest with you to answer the following five questions. Make sure you allow them to answer freely and take any criticism with love. Don't get upset but develop a strategy to improve.


1. List three words that come to mind when you think of my business.




2. Does my personal image (how I dress, how I speak, etc) match my professional image (my business concept)?



3. Would you rate the quality of my marketing materials as low-quality, medium-quality or high-quality?



4. Do you consider my online sites to have more personal or professional content?



5. How likely are you to refer me to someone that you know?

3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR NATURAL NETWORK

One of the most overlooked groups of people that many professionals fail to consider are the people that they already know, their natural network.

Ask yourself, “Who do I know that I have never discussed my business with?”

Many times, we overlook the people closest to us because we assume that they know what we do and if they need us, they will contact us. The truth is – a lot of your closest family and friends have no clue about what you do or what you can do for them. Rather than trying to “sell” them, you should inform

or educate them about your product/service. They may not need you now but they may in the future and your chances have increased that you may be the person that they consider for the job.



Often we fail to have these conversations because we are afraid of what they will say about our business. We don't want to risk them rejecting our business idea or telling us the million and one reasons that they don't think it is going to work. This is not the type of conversation that you want to have. You want to have an informational session not an approval session. Rather than getting their input about what you can do better or your chances for success, approach the conversation from a position of authority. You want them to know that you have this business concept under control and you need their help to take it to the next level. If they don't believe in what you are doing, don't spend your time trying to convince them. Instead, move on to the next person and keep your focus on building a network of people who believe in your success and who are committed to seeing you succeed. You don't want or need people on your team who will be doubting you or causing you to doubt yourself.

Also, consider taking family or friends to events with you. They may be able to introduce you to someone who they never would have thought could be an asset to your team. It may also help to ease some anxiety for you to know at least one person in the room. The key to this strategy is not spending the evening talking to the person that you know.

ACTIVITY – MAKE CONTACT

List twenty-five to contact within the next five weeks (average one conversation per business day) to have a professional discussion about your business. Print the sheet on the following page and list twenty-five people to have this conversation with. Set a date to contact them, preferably by phone or in person. Be prepared to discuss all aspects of your business and have some literature (business cards, site links, product samples, brochures, etc) to show them. Remember, you are not trying to sell them. You want to educate them so that they can be an advocate for your business and provide referrals when they meet someone that can use your product/service.

Topics to cover:

- What do you do?*
- Who are some of people that you have done it for?*
- What was their reaction to working with you?*
- What is the advantage to working with you versus the competition?*
- Where can they send people to get more information about your product/service?*

4. BUILD YOUR VIRTUAL NETWORK



It amazes me how many business owners are not tuned in to social networking to build their professional network. There are many advantages to networking online but the main advantage is that it is FREE!

In today's marketplace, more and more business is being done online and if your business doesn't have an online presence, you are likely to miss informing potential customers about your product or service.

Not everyone shops online but many people will research products and services online and then go to a store to make a purchase. If you are able to provide the information, you may be able to get the sale.

I believe that many people fail to do things, not always because they don't to, but often because they don't know how to. When creating an online presence there are five things to consider:

1. **How can I customize the URL to make it relevant to my business?** Many sites will allow you to create a username and/or customize the extension of the site URL so that your followers/friends can easily find you (ex. twitter.com/LaKeshaWomack, facebook.com/MsLaKeshaWomack). Rather than using a URL that is a mixture of random letters and numbers, using a custom URL will make it easier for others to find you and for you to promote the link to your site.
2. **Who will I use this site to communicate with?** Different people receive information in different places. A recent client that I worked with wanted to create a twitter, LinkedIn and facebook account. I advised the client to consider who they would be communicating with on the different sites. On the twitter account, they were more likely to follow industry peers and accounts that post information about forecasts in their industry. As a business-to-business company, they decided to use their LinkedIn account to network with potential clients. They created a company profile and a group for their company, which allowed them to post more information than a personal profile, allows. They also decided to use a facebook business page to links to articles and events so that they could connect with people that they knew personally.
3. **What message will I use this site to convey about my product/service?** Once you decide which sites you will use, you have to determine what you are going to say on the sites. I often use the example of the cell phone when explaining the importance of your brand message. A cell phone is a relatively universal product. It can be used by teenage girls and middle-aged businesspersons. However, when you consider these two groups, you realize that not only do they get their information from different sources but they also respond to different messages. When creating your networking strategy, you have to make sure that what you are saying is what people will want to hear. Otherwise, they will not consider you relevant and there will be no reason for them to want to be a part of your network.
4. **How often should I update the site?** Answering this question requires that you take a serious inventory of the time that you have available for social networking because updating three to five sites daily can require a considerable amount of time. There are applications like Hootsuite.com that allow you to link several social media sites and schedule posts to the different networks but you have to make time to schedule the posts and monitor any feedback that you receive.
5. **How can I customize the site to make sure it fits within my brand image?** You will often hear me say that image is everything. When you think about some of the top brands, an image of that company's logo or brand comes to mind. You want to create a similar effect so that when

people come to your online business location, they are not confused as they go from site to site. Although the specific messages may vary, the color scheme and overall benefits of doing business with you should be the same.

Networking online is also a great way to build your personal brand. I use the following sites to promote my brand:

- <http://LaKeshaWomack.com/>– I bought my name as my domain name to create a website that tells all about me and it serves as a virtual resume. It also shows up in some search engines when people Google my name. This allows me to control the image people have about me and allows me to highlight a variety of professional talents.
- <http://linkedin.com/in/WomackCG> – LinkedIn is a popular professional networking site. It serves as a virtual resume because it allows you to detail your education and professional experience. You are able to establish connections with other professionals and access their professional network, by invitation. The site also allows you to provide and receive recommendations, which is a great way to have someone else toot your horn and validate your expertise. One of my favorite features is the “Answers.” Professionals from around the world pose questions and you are allowed to answer using your expertise. If your answer is selected as a best answer, you can be considered an expert. What better way to grow your network than to let people see what you know?
- <http://twitter.com/LaKeshaWomack> – I have heard some people question the effectiveness of tweeting but it is a great way to build a network of like-minded professionals. There are some people who tweet every second of their day but most of your followers will appreciate you posting insightful information and links to information that they will find useful. You only have 140 characters so it doesn’t take long to post a tweet. A popular feature within Twitter is the ability to create “lists.” Using the list feature allows you to sort through the people that you are following.
- <http://facebook.com/MsLaKeshaWomack> – having friends on Facebook is great but it makes some people nervous because they don’t like that strangers have access to their personal information. Creating a business page for your personal or professional brand will allow you to connect with your online community while maintaining your personal page for family and friends.

ACTIVITY – CREATE A SOCIAL NETWORKING STRATEGY

Choose four sites and answer the five questions posed above. It may seem time consuming to sit down and complete but trust me; the time will be well spent.

WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?

	1.	2.	3.	4.
Platform (i.e. Twitter, Facebook)				
URL (ex. foursquare.com/LaKeshaWomack)				
Target Market				
Message				
Frequency of Updates				
How to Customize				



5. CREATE A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP

You cannot and should not go through life believing that the world owes you anything. If you want to be successful, you should approach life with the mindset that you will have to work your tail feather off for any and every opportunity that comes your way. You should be pleasantly surprised and grateful when someone offers to do something for you and does not expect anything in return.

The fact is... everyone wants to know what is in it for them. If you can't think of anything that the person you are networking with will get out of having a professional relationship with you, they may not be a good person to add to your team. Although the person may seem extremely interested in what you are saying or doing during your conversation, when the time comes for them to do the action that will produce results for you, they will wonder what the advantage is for them taking time out of their busy schedule to help you. If they can't think of one, your project may get demoted on their list of things to do.

There are some selfless people in the world that will help you out of the kindness of their heart but you should make it a Best Practice to go into situations looking to create a win-win situation for both parties. This will make you someone who people want to work with again in the future.

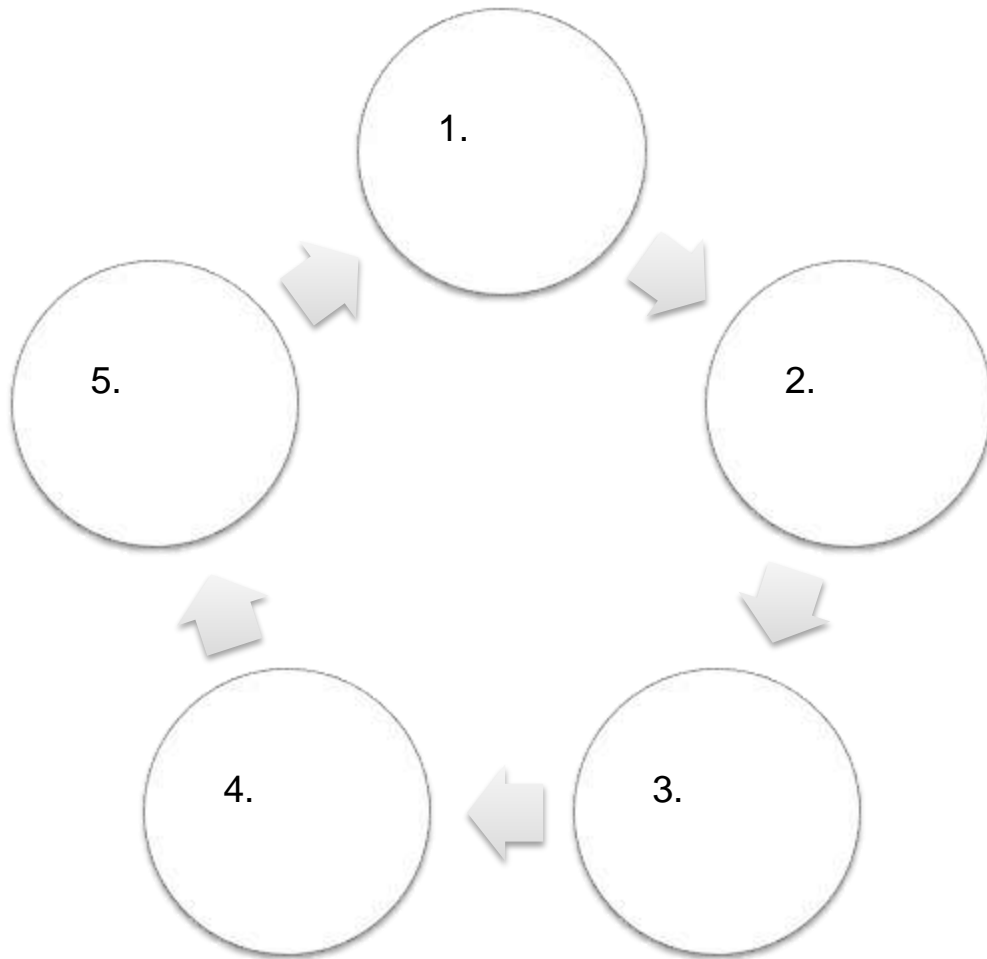
Networking is about building relationships. You cannot be successful if you go to events, give everyone your business card then sit back and wait for the phone to start ringing off the hook. People, who are serious about building their network, want to meet other professionals with a similar mindset. They don't want to waste their time with selfish people only looking to take and have nothing to give. On the converse, you don't want to be the person that is known for always giving and never receiving anything in return.



ACTIVITY – WHY YOU?

List five benefits that people within your professional network can receive by working with you. Could you help to promote an event/project that they have coming up? Could you sign on as a sponsor for a project that they are working on? Could you offer them a referral bonus for new clients? Could you barter services? Whatever you have to offer, don't put all of your cards on the table during the initial meeting. This conversation should be had during your one on one.

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING WITH ME



6. THE MORE YOU GO, THE MORE YOU GROW

No matter how many great networking tips and strategies you receive, you have to go out and use them. I have become a good judge of networking events based on their descriptions and the time of day that they are held.

Serious networkers come out for breakfast events. They are very efficient networkers and don't like to waste a lot of time. They also seem more committed to building a lasting relationship and meet more consistently. I like to network over breakfast because the meetings rarely run over their time limit since most people are anxious to get to work and start their day. They are also more budget friendly events.



Lunch networking events tend to cost a little more than breakfast events but attendance can be less consistent because there is always a chance that someone will get caught up at work and have to cancel at the last minute. The events can seem rushed because people are trying to eat, cover any business that is related to the event and get back to work within an hour or two. Lunch events are good if you are attending to hear a presenter because the presentations are usually short and to the point but there isn't always a lot of time to get to know the attendees unless you count talking while eating.

I have almost given up on making business contacts at after work networking events because little to any business is done. They are usually great for making social connections but by the end of a business day people are tired of talking and thinking about work so they just want to relax. This obviously will depend on the group hosting the event but if there is alcohol involved, prepare to have fun and be pleasantly surprised if you make a business connection.

You will be successful at networking if you approach it with the mindset that it is work, it is more of an art than a science and it is all about the relationship.

ACTIVITY - CREATE A CALENDAR OF NETWORKING EVENTS.

First, identify three to five organizations that you would like to use to build your network. Go online and check out their calendar of events. Add the ones that seem like they could be beneficial to your relationship building to your calendar. You should plan to attend one to two events per week. Ideally, one breakfast event and one event should be during lunch.

PLAN YOUR NETWORKING AND WORK YOUR PLAN

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week One	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$
Week Two	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$
Week Three	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$
Week Four	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$	Organization Topic \$

ABOUT LAKESHA WOMACK

Thank you again for taking the time to review my eBook, "The Art of Networking." It is my goal that working through the exercises will help you to develop a more clear idea of how to create a successful network and who should be a part of that network. I am sure that you are naturally curious about the person behind the book and how I know so much about networking.

I wear many hats including single mother of a five year old; self-published author of "[Is She The ONE?](#)" and "Success Secrets for the Young & Fabulous"; blogger on [LaKeshaWomack.com](#) and Inspirational Speaker; however, the most relevant for you is Business Consultant. I specialize in working with small business owners who are starting a business, needing assistance taking their business to the next level or wanting to create or improve their brand.

I have about ten years of experience as a Business Consultant working within various industries including Real Estate, Printing & Publishing, Retail, Event Planning, Financial Services, Salon & Spa Services and many more. I assist my clients with writing business plans, writing strategic plans, writing marketing plans, creating cash flow projections and establishing timelines to achieve their goals. My company, [Womack Consulting Group](#), not only provides these tangible deliverables but we also offer consulting sessions so that we can work frequently and closely with you to ensure you reach your goals.

Thank you again for reviewing this e-book. Obviously, I only scratched the surface of most of these topics so don't be upset if it left you wanting more information. You have three options moving forward:

1. Go online and do some additional research so that you can create a more detailed networking strategy
2. Get started with the information you have so far and figure out the rest as you go along
3. Contact me for a **COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION** to see how Womack Consulting Group can help make your networking goals a reality

Thanks again!

LaKesha Womack



NETWORK WITH ME...

Email ::: Consult@LaKeshaWomack.com

Personal Blog Site ::: <http://LaKeshaWomack.com>

Business Blog Site ::: <http://WomackCG.com>

Book Blog Site ::: <http://IsSheTheONEbook.com>

Late Night with LaKesha ::: <http://blogtalkradio.com/LaKeshaWomack>

Business Profile on Facebook ::: <http://facebook.com/MsLaKeshaWomack>

Track my comings and goings ::: <http://foursquare.com/LaKeshaWomack>

Professional Resume & Recommendations ::: <http://linkedin.com/in/WomackCG>

Follow Me ::: <http://twitter.com/LaKeshaWomack>

Thank you!!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance as you build your network.