

Networking Success Blueprint

**How to Turn any Networking Event
Into a Huge Success
Using 3 Simple Steps**



Janice Bennett

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I want to **thank you** and congratulate you for downloading this Networking Success Blueprint.

I put together this Blueprint because of the trend that I'm seeing right now where people are attending live networking events without a plan on how they will follow-up. You are about to create your own networking plan that will:

- Identify your goals for attending the event
- Build your list with authenticity
- Attract clients, joint venture and referrals easily and effortlessly during the event
- Automate your follow-up after the event

As a business owner and networker, it is **your** job to network and follow-up with potential partners and clients if **you** want to build and grow **your** business – don't leave it to the other person to contact you on the assumption that they will if they need your services.

It's your business! Let me say that again – It's **YOUR** business!

Use this blueprint to turn your next networking event into a huge success!

A Little About Me

I am a Systems Strategy Coach and I work with entrepreneurs who have become overwhelmed with the details of running their business, to get them back to doing what they do best. I help them to develop and fine tune these processes so that they can support, build, and grow their business. I like to say that I take the mumbo jumbo out of that whole technical concept of systems, and really help explain it in a way that is easy to understand and allows you, as a business owner, to implement with confidence. That's just a little bit about what it is that I do.



There was a time when it was more common for people to talk face to face, or voice to voice with one-another. I remember growing up when we used to have company drop by our house, visit, have coffee and chat about what was happening. Now we get a Facebook® status update from them while we're still sitting in our pajamas, perhaps sipping on a cup of coffee.

Now don't get me wrong, I like my Facebook® time just like the next person, but I also am what some would call a "social butterfly" – I love to talk to people. I mean really talk to them.

I am a lot like my grandmother, I can sit down in just about any place and strike up a conversation with a complete stranger. I am always fascinated to learn about them. Perhaps even more fascinating is when a perfect stranger has similarities to me – friends and family connections, similar interests in hobbies, similar experiences in travelling, and the list goes on. You've probably heard the phrase "don't talk to strangers" – well not me – I "do talk to strangers."

Introduction

I'm going to briefly cover the 3 basic preparation stages for attending a live networking event.

1. Before – What is the plan? Why?
2. During – Working the room.
3. After – Following-up with everyone.

The term or phrase **networking event**, I consider to be a broad term that not only includes organized networking like a Chamber of Commerce event, a BNI group, or some other of type of locally organized, specifically intended networking event. It can also be a conference that you're attending, a retreat, or some other large event. Maybe you're the keynote speaker at an event or maybe you're teaching a presentation. You could be at the grocery store. You could be at the school. In the latter two examples, you may not do all the planning, per se, but if you do some of the planning in advance for those other events, then this piece definitely applies to those other areas and helps you with that.

I bet if you actually opened the top drawer of your desk right now, you'd probably have lots of business cards that you've collected over the years of attending networking events and you're really not sure what you are going to do with those cards. Hopefully we can help you with that and put that fortune back in the follow-up for you.

I'm going to give you some strategies to help you prepare for your next networking event that you're going to be attending. Additionally, there are 2 email templates, a 3-step follow-up flowchart, and a getting ready checklist to help you prepare prior to attending an event.

To get started, there is the 'Before', 'During' and 'After'. All three are equally important to the entire process. When I work with and speak to people in terms of helping them plan as they are going to a networking event, the 'Before' piece is

the part that they may not be doing well or even doing at all. I think that makes it difficult for the 'During' and the 'After' because if you don't have the 'Before' piece laid out, it really does make it more difficult to get to the 'During' and 'After'.

Before

You've probably heard on a number of occasions, the statement that the fortune is in the follow-up. I know I intuitively understood it, but in terms of actually putting the processes in place or truly understanding the whole concept of the follow-up, what does a follow-up **really** look like, what do you do, how do you do it, and when do you do it, that was something that took me a while to figure out.

Before attending **any** networking event, you need to know what your goal is for attending. If you are new in business, your goal for attending may look very different than say someone else's goal who has been in business for a long period of time. Regardless of how long you've been in business, you still need to know what you intend to have as an outcome from the event.

Before you attend the networking event, what is your goal for attending the event? Why are you going? What is it that you want to achieve as a result of attending that event?

Some people approach a networking event with the only goal of finding new clients, but I approach it differently. I am looking to make connections, to find other joint venture businesses or people to do partner with, as they might have connections to the people who may be my ideal clients. That's a goal that you need to figure out. What is the outcome you are trying to achieve with respect to the event? What is it that you're going in for?

I mentioned the ideal client. This would actually be a **pre-before** activity, knowing who your ideal clients are. If you know who they are prior to the networking events, it's obviously going to help you. Knowing who they are, where they hang out, what they buy, what their income level is, if they have children or they're married or single, own their home or rent, where do they shop, and so on and so on. What is the demographic of the people you are actually looking for, in terms of your ideal clients? Knowing that ahead of time helps you know where to go to find those people.

Thinking about who your ideal client is prior to going to a networking event will help you go to the right event in advance. Sometimes they change a little bit, but once you know who your ideal client is, then that pretty much stays so you don't have to go through all that work again.

What is your goal for attending the event? Why are you attending the event? How are you attending the event? Are you a speaker or a presenter? Are you going to have a booth there? Or are you just going to be a networker or you are going to be educating yourself; you're going to learn about the different strategies? Maybe there is some other speaker who is there that you want to learn from. Why is it that you are going? For each one of those, there are some different pieces that you need to be able to do prior, during, and after.

For example, if you're going to be a speaker at an event. For the part of the networking piece, I'm going to assume that you have your speech written and that type of thing. Do you have a way to collect names from the people? Do you have an offer? You may not be **sell** at some of these presentations, and if that's the case, can you offer something for free, and in which case still collect names? If you are allowed, are you going to collect the names by using some type of form, are you going to use a raffle, are you going to give something away, are you going to offer a complimentary session, or whatever it is that is relevant to your business? How are you going to collect the names of the people who are there?

If you have a booth set up, for example, what are you going to do for that? There is some pre-work, besides the fact that you're going to need tablecloths, posters, and maybe some booth decorations. Don't forget that you're going to need business cards. Are you able to have a raffle or offer, are you able to provide sessions, are you going to be able to collect names? What are you going to be doing at that booth? How are you going to collect those?

If you're there fully as a participant in the event yourself, as a networker, then why is it that you're going? As I mentioned, sometimes I go to an event and I'm there to find other people who I want to partner with because they may have people on their list who are my ideal clients. Is that the reason that you're going to go networking? Maybe you're there to look for your ideal clients. I caution some people, when they do go to these events, if their main focus is to go there to solely find clients. Be careful because sometimes you go to places, you're there to learn, you're there to participate, and then people say, "Hey, buy my stuff." Think about that before you go. What is the reason you are participating there?

There are a couple of big things. Before you go, you know when that event is so it's quite likely that you're blocking that time off for the event, especially if you're travelling. Maybe it's a day, maybe it's a half day, maybe it's three days. Whatever it is, have you blocked that time out in your calendar?

There is a piece I find that people miss. When we think about the concept of ***the fortune and the follow-up***, it is blocking off the time for after the event. You know before the event that you're going to be going to the event, and you know that there are many things that can be happening. You're going to be meeting people and you could be learning some interesting strategies, so there will be some action items that you'll want to take.

There is going to be stuff that's going to happen as a result of attending the event, and if you don't have that time carved out in your calendar to be able to take care of these items immediately after the event, then it's likely that you're not going to be making the time to do it. I think that's part of what happens in the follow-up, that people haven't carved that time out, so when they get back to their office, then other priorities have come up. Then they say, "I'll get to it."

I have done it myself. "I'll schedule time on Friday for next week. I'll remember to do that then." Then other things keep coming up or they start to get scheduled into your calendar, then before you know it, you're now a couple of weeks past

the event. Then you think you can't possibly do it now because people have already forgotten about you.

Here's my rule of thumb: If you are going to an event that is a day long, then you should at least schedule the day after for follow-up. You're probably not going to need a whole day, but carve out a chunk of time for the day after. If you're attending an event that's three days, you're probably not going to need three days' worth of follow-up afterward, but look in those next three days that are after that event and block out some time. If you're travelling across the country and coming back, obviously you're going to need to block out the travel time. Then after that, schedule some time for the follow-up.

I can tell you right now that I'm travelling to Florida in the next couple of days and I'm going to be attending a three-day event. I already have time set aside in my calendar for after I return. After my trip and I arrive back home, I already have time scheduled in my calendar for when I'm going to be working on following up. It's there, so I don't have to worry about anyone booking an appointment during that time because I have already set it aside. Blocking out that time is a big piece in the 'Before'. Set that time now and then you have that for following up.

The other important piece for before the networking event is preparing what the follow-up is going to be. Having a template message for following up with them is something to do in advance. I've included a couple of email templates to help you prepare in advance. Then all you need to do is modify it after the event with personal information about your new connection as well as anything specific about the event. The actual act of this can be completed by delegating.

Maybe you have something that you would like to offer them. Maybe you have a complimentary strategy session or an e-book that's free for them. You want to prepare in advance some of the things you may want to remind them of, that you talked about at the networking event, because you're going to go planning to talk

about something, so you have that ready. What do you need to have ready before the event?

Those are the three areas in the 'Before' of networking and following up.

1. What is your goal for attending?
2. Blocking off the time for after the event.
3. Knowing how you're going to be participating and what it is that you're going to be offering for after the event.

During

It's a little bit more than just being there. You've probably heard the terminology 'Know, like, trust'. Going to these networking events, you can just see people all of the sudden say, "Hi, I'm blah-blah-blah, this is what I do. Are you interested in buying what it is I have to offer? I have this new vacuum cleaner. Blah-blah-blah." You can picture it all happening. What do you do when you see those people coming at you? Turn your head and go the other way?

When you go to these events, go there thinking about the fact that there are going to be other people there who will want to network with you. How do you want them to network with you? How do you want them to come and approach you? Think about that when you go and approach other people.

I'm going to share with you what I think is the best client attraction tool that I have in my toolbox. It is my number one tool resource that I have and I always have it. It's always free, it's always at my disposal, and I can't delegate it to anyone. It's not delegable; it's only me and I have to use it. It is the smile; smiling and laughing.

I really took that for granted or I was naïve to it. I started to really listen to a lot of people. I could be just about anywhere, not even at a networking event, and people comment on my smile and my laughter. They are always commenting on it in a positive way, but they're attracted to having conversations with me. So just think about that.

You know if you're in a room and you see people having fun, and then you see someone that's maybe pouting off in the corner somewhere with their arms folded, a big frown on their face and you can see the wrinkles in their forehead, which one would you rather go hang out with and maybe get in a conversation with? Thinking about which one might be more fun. That's me. Fun is a core value for me. Not so much so that you're silly, but it really needs to be fun.

To me, networking needs to be fun. Because I laugh and I'm smiling all the time, then people want to come and hang with me and we can get into conversations really quickly. That's my tool. You have it too and you can use it whenever you want. I challenge you to use that. Go with the smile.

At the event, what you really want to do is build relationships, no matter if you're there as the speaker, presenter, if you have a booth, if you are a networker yourself, however you are participating in the event, you want to build relationships. You want to build the relationship with your potential client, with your potential joint venture partner, with potential referrals. You don't know who is there and what the possibilities are in terms of connecting you to your ideal clients. You really want to be there to build the relationship. Through that whole 'Know, like, trust' factor, people will spend more money with people who they know, trust, and who they have a relationship with.

Personally, when I go to a local store, if I know the person and if I know that they're friendly, fun, helpful, courteous, honest, and all of those good values, you just enjoy being there and you want to continue to go there. I spend more money at the places that I enjoy being than the places I don't.

Think about it. Most people don't enjoy going to the dentist and it's not a lot of fun. Maybe you will spend some money there, but it's not a place you would just drop by to spend money. There are other places that you may want to do that. Think about who works in the store. Maybe it's the owner, maybe it's the person behind the counter, or maybe it's the person who held open the door for you. It's really building that relationship and making it a great place to be. People will spend more money when they know, like and trust you.

If you're at the event as a participant, don't just walk up and fire hose with what it is that you do and why you're there. Be more interested than interesting.

As I mentioned, build the relationship, but listen to them and be caring about what it is that they need. What are the needs of the people that you're working with or talking to? To find that out, you ask questions.

I'm always fascinated by why people get into business. That's a favourite question of mine. I always like to know that. Why were they inspired to get into business? Get them talking about them. Ask a couple of great questions. You probably only need to ask one or two, and if you ask about them and not necessarily about what they do, you will find out what they do and you'll find out that really passionate piece. You may even find out the pains that they have, some troubles that they have going on in their business or their personal life that you may be able to help them with. By asking those couple of questions, you can learn that in that dialog-type of conversation.

They don't necessarily have their back up against the wall thinking, "Oh my gosh, what's this person asking me? They're trying to sell me something. I don't want to talk to them. I don't want to be sold." You ask them a genuine question, that you care about what they have as an answer, and they're going to talk to you and tell you. Even if they don't, well then maybe they're not your ideal client. Maybe they're not the person that you're there to help or that you want to partner with anyway.

If they start to tell their story and you listen to that, then you can massage in how you might be able to help them. I wouldn't necessarily just go full-on into a coaching session with them or go into what you have, but it may be that you have the opportunity to be able to share with them what it is that you can help them with.

Most often, what will happen is that you'll ask a question like how did they get in business, how are they inspired or what is it that they do, and then they will ask you the same question and that will allow you that opportunity. Be more interested than interesting.

For the 'During' stage, I mentioned this in the 'Before' in terms of preparing, do you have a way to collect their names and collect their information? Are you using ballots or are you just collecting their business cards?

If you are collecting business cards to collect their information, there's nothing wrong with that. If you are at an event where there are not people in business, then you may need another way to collect their information. If you're at an event that you're able to collect business cards, then are you also doing something with those cards to help you after the event? If you are at an event and you only get a couple of cards, it may not be so bad, but if you had a three-day event and you come home with 100 cards, you're not likely going to remember the card you got on the first day of the event by the third day of the event. Have a strategy for marking on the cards what it is that you want to do with them.

You probably should have a mailing list. Maybe you have a database, maybe you send out a newsletter to your list or you're looking to build a list, don't just automatically put them on your list when you come back with those cards. It wasn't at a networking event, but it was through another way, I had sent out a newsletter to my list. A couple of days later I got their newsletter, which really surprised me because I didn't sign up for their list. They signed me up for their list.

I had to have this conversation with the person because that can be spamming. I'm sure that they didn't realize it and that their intentions were really good, especially since they had been on my list for a while, and then the particular article I had written about was directly related to the type of business that they're in, so I think that was the reason that they chose to add me to their list. I just caution you, as you're out collecting these business cards, do not go back and automatically put them on your list.

Here's how you can handle that during that situation. As you're collecting the names and business cards, you have a couple of choices. You can ask them directly if they're interested in being on your newsletter list or if they're interested in receiving a free e-book, a complimentary session or something that they would be signing up for. If you ask them, and they've given you permission, then you can add them. If you have not asked them, **you cannot** put them on your list.

If you've asked them, then what I like to do is write a letter of the alphabet on their card. If I've asked them and they're interested in getting my newsletter, I might use the letter 'N'. It doesn't have to be a long story or anything like that. That said, there might be something in the conversation that we had that I was really inspired by or that I'd like to remember when I do follow-up with the person, so I may quickly jot down a note or a word or two on the card.

If I've asked them to be on my list and they said yes, then I will put an 'N' on the card. That helps me at the end of an event to know what I'm doing with those cards. If they are somebody I would really like to follow up with, maybe they're an ideal client, then I may also put the letter 'F' on there for follow-up. All of these people are going to get a follow-up, but that would be a different follow-up communication for me than someone that wouldn't have it.

If they are potentially a good joint venture partner for me, I would write the letter 'J' on the card. There might be a reason to have a couple of letters on the card, but those would be the three that I would use.

- 'N' – Newsletter. I asked them and they said yes.
- 'F' – Following up because I really would like to speak with and connect with them further personally, on the phone.
- 'J' – Joint venture.

In the last two cases, neither of those means that they're on your list. Just because they are letters that you put on the card, it does not mean that they get added to the list. They only get added to the list if you directly ask them.

If you also have some other thing that would make more sense to you then the letter 'N', use whatever letter you like. I'm just sharing with you how I do mine.

If they say no, definitely **do not** put them on your list. If you do not ask them, we'll talk about how you're going to handle that in the 'After' part of the following up.

Again, just remember that my number one tool in my toolbox is to smile, laugh and enjoy it. I share that with you to make sure you smile, laugh and enjoy the networking event, the networking experience, and you will find the next stage, the 'After', will be a breeze now that we're going to be putting these strategies in place. We'll see you in the next section.

After

I mentioned in the 'Before' that you should be blocking off time in your calendar, so I'm going to assume that you've already done that, and now you have the time blocked off in your calendar to be able to handle the following up.

Following up should happen within 24-48 hours after the event. If it doesn't happen, it's still okay. It's not the end of the world, but it will really make more of an impression if you are able to follow up within 24-48 hours.

Obviously, if you have traveled a far distance across the country and you are traveling back, you may want to adjust your follow-up 24-48 hours by adding an extra 12 hours or something. You want to be following up within that time period after the event.

As I mentioned in the last part of the 'During' call, you start to get all those business cards and you have some noted with 'N', 'F', or 'J'; newsletter, follow up, and joint venture. Those are the ones that I use.

Let's talk about the newsletter ones. You have your newly collected stack of business cards and you have the ones that have said yes, that they'd be interested in receiving your newsletter. In the 'Before' section, we talked about the fact that you're also going to have template messages that are already pre-written and are ready. All you need to do is modify the event information, and maybe a personal detail that you wanted to include if you happened to write that on the business card.

For all those who said they would be interested in receiving your newsletter, you're going to send them a following up email just to say, "Hey, it was great to meet you at the event. Thank you for agreeing to be on my newsletter list. I just wanted to say that in the next"—however often you post your newsletter, whatever the timeframe is, you're just letting them know that within a short

period of time they should start receiving the newsletter. If there's anything else that you can do for them, please get in touch with me, and give them your name and number.

The other thing you should also do is make sure that you have your picture. It won't come out looking like your newsletter, but have your picture in your signature line at the bottom so they remember you and say, "Oh yes, I remember him/her now."

Send an email right away to all the people who said yes to the newsletter so that they get the email prior to getting the newsletter. They should get that first to remind them that they did agree and that it's coming.

If they didn't say yes to the newsletter, you can still send them an email. It is absolutely critical that you make sure it is not in your list, and you should also say that you have not added them to your list. Make sure that you mention that to them. Send them an email and say, "Hey, thanks for following up. I'm so glad to have met you at the event." You can also then let them know whatever you might have, like a free gift on your website that you invite them to check out. Let them sign up for your newsletter and your list, if they wish to.

I know some people will send out an actual email to these folks up to three times. If you're going to do that, make sure you tell them how many more times you are going to send them an email so that they know, and they also know that they are not on your list and you are just sending them a reminder message. Definitely send them an email if you have their email address.

In both cases, you may also want to drop them a postcard or something in the mail, as another way to connect with them, because you have that information as well.

You have the stack of cards and you've handled the newsletter ones. Those ones are easy to handle. Go through those cards and look for the hot leads. Maybe those are the ones that you had already written the 'F' on, for example. Those are the ones that you really want to follow up with, and/or the 'J's, the joint ventures in my list. You may also have some of those and they may be hot leads as well.

The ones that you really want to follow up with, those you follow up with by phone call. You'll know why it is that you want to follow up with them and you'll have that little bit of a message, and whatever that reason was that you wanted to follow up with them, you can do so. You should also then send them an email as well, after you have made contact with them by phone.

Another thing to do in the 'After' is if you are using social media as a way to get out there, then you should also add the strategy to find them in the different social medias. You may look for them on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or whatever forum you are using.

These 'After' strategies, can all be delegated except for the phone call. The phone calls need to be done by you, but all of the other pieces of that can be delegated to your assistant or virtual assistant, handled that way, and automated in that process, in terms of following up.

I want to thank you and I hope that as a result of these 'Before', 'During', and 'After' networking strategies and the tips that I have shared with you, you're your next networking experience is not a daunting one to you anymore.

Bonus: Social Media

Anyone who invites you to join their network or become a friend, or if you invite them to join yours, for example on Facebook®, LinkedIn® or Twitter®, should also receive a template message from you, very similar to what you do with email. It may not be quite the same, but you might also mention that you met at the networking event and you want to connect. Don't try to promote anything else in those messages.

Final Comments

My goal is to help you make this process one that you actually enjoy. The folks who respond back to you when you send out the emails are your potential hot leads as well. At that point, those ones start to become ones that you may really want to get involved with in conversations. If you have an assistant send out the email messages to all of the other cards, for example, the newsletter and the non-newsletter ones, and you start to get responses back from people on that because they'd like to learn more, that becomes something that you then get on the phone to those individuals yourself and connect with them.

I hope that this has helped to streamline the process for you. The following up is actually a system, and if you do that, then it flows. It makes it easy. There are pieces that can be delegated and there are pieces that you need to do yourself, for obvious reasons, but you can have others help you with that and take some of that weight off of your shoulders.

I really hope that there are some tips in this that will help you at your next networking event. I would love for you to share with me how they've helped you, if they've helped you. Maybe there is something that you don't understand or maybe I could do a better job clarifying. Absolutely let me know. I want to make sure that this resource works for you and works for many, many other people because most of us want to be in business. That's what we're here for.

We're in business, and in order to be in business, we need to have clients and customers. So I really want to make sure that people are able to build their client resources, build their list, put their networking efforts, put the dollars that they've spent, and make sure that they get the most out of them. If there's anything that I can do to add to this to make it a better resource for you, by all means, please let me know. I will be happy to add more to it.

I look forward to talking to you soon. I look even more forward to maybe meeting you somewhere at an event, smiling and laughing, and asking each other, "Why did you get started in this business?" That's my favourite question. I look forward to meeting you soon.