DTD Episode 29 Show Notes

5 C's to Creating Ideal Connections

Networking often gets a bad rap. Networking itself is not bad it's just that many of us have transitioned it to something that doesn't work well. I hear clients say they hate it or it doesn't "lead to anything."

I once was at a gathering of about 500 business professionals and witnessed the epitome of networking gone wrong. We were on a short break so everyone was rushing to do what they needed to in the 15 minutes we had. Participants grabbed water, hit restrooms and returned emails with gusto. The lobby was filled with people tucked into spaced to make phone calls.

As one woman knelt in her claimed space returning a call I watched as another participant walked up and slid her business cards between two of her fingers as she held her phone. She turned with a puzzled look on her face as she attempted to maintain her composure to complete the call.

How long do you think it took her to discard that card once the call was complete? I'm guessing the length of time it took her to get to the nearest trashcan.

While most don't exhibit such egregious behavior, many still act in a way that discourages people from participating in networking events. It's what's given networking a bad name.

I encourage my clients to connect rather than network in an effort to remove the negative connotation and also to give it a name more aligned with the true goal.

Networking makes me conjure images of messy cables and loose connections.

Let's instead commit to connect.

Here are the 5 C's I share to create the appropriate goals and give you the right mindset to create successful connections.

- **Couple:** Create a goal of meeting just a couple or a few people who you really enjoy speaking with. Take the time to have a nice conversation that begins the journey of a relationship. The goal should never be to get your card in the hands of random people or to speak with as many people as people.

- **Curiosity:** enter into conversations with authentic curiosity to learn about another human being. Too many people worry about what they should say about themselves. Take the pressure off and become more engaging by instead seeking to ask questions that will ignite a nice conversation. Go to an event armed with a few very generic questions that will get the communication started. Here are a few examples: Where do you work? What do you do? Any travel plans coming up? Do you follow any sports teams?

- **Common Interests:** as you enjoy a nice conversation seek out areas of common interest and explore those further. Common interests are a way to authentically connect with others and are an indication that you might enjoy doing business together down the road.

- **Contribute:** after meeting look for ways that you can contribute to them. Is there an article or resource that would prove helpful as a follow up to your conversation? Do they have an event coming up that you could help to promote? Seek out ways to be of service.

- **Catch Up:** the initial meeting is just the start. Now it's time to foster the relationship. It takes time to create an authentic relationship. Out of those you meet determine who you will catch up with in person and who you will connect with mostly with phone or email. Plan ahead and know what you hope to achieve from the meeting. Where do

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you see synergy between your businesses or where might you be of service?

I almost always start with an in-person meeting and I accept many requests from others to meet as well.

Before accepting an invitation, however, I always like to know what someone's expectations are. I don't want to waste their time or mine if our agendas would not be aligned.

For instance, if a financial planner asks to meet with me I want to make certain he or she is not seeking me out as a prospect. I am all set in that arena.

Make sure that the time is well spent for all involved and get those follow up meetings scheduled. Go with the same agenda, authentic curiosity but with more focus on how you might help each other or work together.

As I end every introduction message: Happy Connecting!

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