

## 4 Basic Steps of Networking: Life's Blood of Small Business

There are many great books to help you with business networking. Read as many books as possible so you can develop your own unique technique. Many people shy away from networking because they don't know what to do. There are four simple steps that must be followed for effective business networking:

**1. Choose Events Wisely:** Attend events where there will be business owners or decision-makers to buy your product or service. Don't waste time attending all events as there will be a lot of events where people are just not suitable to purchase from you.

**2. Talk to Strangers:** Walk up to people that you do not know and introduce yourself. Introduce yourself with a firm handshake, look them in the eyes and say your name and company name. After they introduce themselves, ask them questions about their business.

Some suggestions are:

1. How did you get started in that business?
2. How long have you been doing that?
3. What do you like best about your business?

Make the conversation all about them and not you. People love to talk about themselves. If you allow them to talk about themselves, you will be remembered as someone who took the time to get to know them. Networking is not about the quantity of business cards with which you come home. It's about relationships. Bob Burg said in his book, entitled, *Endless Referrals*, "people do business with people they know, like and trust." Be sure to get their business card. Briefly talk about your business and give them your business card.

Be sure you have your "elevator speech" or your 30 second speech perfected. You should have a short introduction of yourself that you can say in your sleep. Your speech should go something like: "I'm Cindy Freland and I own Maryland Secretarial Services. I do everything your administrative assistant does but I do it better, faster and cheaper."

**3. Follow-up:** When you get back to your office, send a follow-up email, "snail" mail a handwritten note, or call to make an appointment. The follow-ups should be short notes to remind them of where you met, wish them success in their business, and remind them of what you do. I like to also invite them to other networking events so you are offering them value and not just trying to get them to buy from you.

**4. Face-to-Face Again:** If you have made an appointment, congratulate yourself. You did a great job in convincing them that you offer value. At the meeting, remember to talk about them and ask more in-depth questions about their business. Find out how you can help them by listening to their concerns. After you have listened and you think you know how to help them, then you can talk about the solutions that you offer.



Article written by Cindy Freland,  
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Inc.

## Networking Groups

**Baltimore-Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce (BWCC)** - BWCC is Maryland's only regional chamber, located in the heart of America's fourth-largest marketplace. Through membership we help members make valuable connections, find new clients and save money. Call (301) 725-4000 or visit the website at [www.bwcc.org](http://www.bwcc.org). Annual Membership Fee: 1-3 Employees \$350, 4-10 Employees \$415

**Business Networking International (BNI)**  
Business Networking International (BNI) is the largest business networking organization in the world. We offer members the opportunity to share ideas, contacts and most importantly, business referrals. Contact Jerry Schwartz at [jer-ry@bnimaryland.com](mailto:jer-ry@bnimaryland.com) or (410) 484-6109. <http://www.bnimaryland.com>. Annual Membership Fee: \$330

**Entrepreneur Exchange (EE)** - EE has monthly luncheon meetings for \$30 for members and \$42 for non-members at Severn Inn in Annapolis at 11:30 AM. They also have monthly evening mixers at 5:30 PM in different locations. [www.eesmallbiz.org](http://www.eesmallbiz.org). Annual Membership Fee: \$125



### **Greater Bowie Chamber of Commerce (GBCC)**

GBCC is made up of members with common interests and concerns related to the business environment in the greater Bowie area. Together we are the only professional trade organization in the greater Bowie area dedicated to the promotion, enhancement and protection of your livelihood. Call (301) 262-0920 or visit the website at [www.bowiechamber.org](http://www.bowiechamber.org). Annual Membership Fee: 1-15 Employees \$225

### **Greater Crofton Chamber of Commerce**

**(GCCC)** - GCCC is organized to advance the general welfare and prosperity of the Greater Crofton Area so that its citizens and all areas of its business community shall prosper. All necessary means of promotion shall be provided and particular attention and emphasis shall be given to the economic, civic, commercial, cultural, industrial and educational interests of the area. Call (410) 721-9131 or visit the website at [www.croftonchamber.com](http://www.croftonchamber.com). Annual Membership Fee: Self-Employed \$130, 2-5 Employees \$145.

### **Meetup.com: Bowie Business Start-Up and Support Group**

—Take the fear out of starting your own business. Network with local entrepreneurs to share tips, get advice & support, & discuss building a successful business. Swap business cards and gain support in growing your business. Call (301) 943-0561 or visit the website at [www.meetup.com/BowieBusiness](http://www.meetup.com/BowieBusiness). **FREE**

**Meetup.com: CEO Business Cafe**—This Meetup was started in 2008 by Odessa Hopkins, Co-Owner of CEO Business Café (<http://www.ceobusinesscafe.com>). Cindy Freland, Owner of Maryland Secretarial Services (<http://www.marylandsecretarial.com>) is the Co-Organizer and primary facilitator of each meetup. Call (301) 352-7927 or visit the website at [www.meetup.com/CEO-Business-Cafe](http://www.meetup.com/CEO-Business-Cafe). **FREE**

**Mid Atlantic Networking**—An online business directory that hosts business networking events and promotes its members across Maryland, Delaware and DC. Call 410-592-2406 or visit the website at [www.midatlanticnetworking.com](http://www.midatlanticnetworking.com), Annual Membership Fee: \$149

**Network Referral Group (NRG)** - Network Referral Group (NRG) has **weekly** meetings from 6:00 – 7:00 PM each Monday at Jacobs Gardner office at 6911 Laurel Bowie Rd, #209, Bowie. Contact Rose Woodruff at (301) 943-0561 or [rose@executivedecisioncoaching.com](mailto:rose@executivedecisioncoaching.com). [www.networkreferralgroup.com](http://www.networkreferralgroup.com). Annual Membership Fee: \$400

**Northern Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce (NAACCC)** - NAACCC provides educational programs, networking events, legislative advocacy, publicity, advertising, and community service opportunities to support our members, while promoting “Better Business, a Stronger Community, and a Brighter Future.” Call (410) 766-8282 or visit the website at [www.naaccc.com](http://www.naaccc.com). Annual Membership Fee: Self-Employed \$125, 2-5 Employees \$175

**Prince George’s County Chamber of Commerce (PGCC)** - PGCC is a non-profit alliance of nearly 800 businesses, representing over a quarter of a million employees, making it one of the largest chambers in the state of Maryland and the seventh largest chamber in the Washington Metropolitan region. Call (301) 731-5000 or visit the website at [www.pgcoc.org](http://www.pgcoc.org). Self-Employed \$300, 2-10 Employees \$375

**Rates may change without notification.**  
**\*\*\*Remember, business networking is an inexpensive, effective way to advertise your business. If done correctly, you will always have a steady stream of business.\*\*\***

# **Business Networking Guide**

**Do you know how to  
grow your business?**



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