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## Networking a critical factor in determining success

By RENA GALANIS  
Advertising Features

In today's job market, the ability to make connections can make the difference between employment and unemployment. Networking. Most people understand the concept but putting it into action is another story.

"Networking consists of identifying those folks who you could be helpful to today, who may be helpful to you down the road," said Tom Stoyan, "Canada's sales coach"

during a seminar sponsored by the Markham Board of Trade at the Radisson Hotel on Hwy #7 last Thursday.

Stoyan is a sales guru and former professor who has worked with a number of companies, large and small, helping them increase their sales potential. IBM, Canada Post and AT&T are just some of the companies he's worked with in the past.

Networking is a critical function in today's business world and separates those who will excel from the rest, he said to the approximately 60-member crowd of professionals and entrepreneurs.

Why? Because business relationships, like all relationships, are built on trust.

"We're emotional beings first, logical second," the soft-spoken Stoyan says. "If an associate of mine introduces me to someone, they say is an expert, I'll believe them and treat that person as one immediately."

The keys to becoming a better networker and thus more successful in the workplace, include goal-setting,

becoming a better listener, knowing what questions to ask and only then determining what to say to the people with whom we network, he adds. Listening to people builds a sense of trust. A genuine interest in their pain and passion is the first step in establishing a relationship.

"People love to talk about themselves and if you listen with sincerity, the trust level goes right up," he says.

"And asking the right questions - becoming interested in others and what they do - is also imperative. Furthermore, devising a concise statement (15 words or less) defining your work and communicating it simply and effectively is the next step to take."

The statement should state what your work is, identify your target market and include the major benefit of dealing with you.

"Entice your listener," Stoyan stresses. "Give enough information to get their interest but don't do all the talking. You want them to start asking questions so you know what information they need and so that you're not giving them information they don't want."

Becoming a member in professional associations in your field in order to network with the right people is also key and the confidence to overcome reluctance, must be there from the start.

"Focus on the value you can bring to others," he says. "And just be yourself. Get good at what you do and decide to have fun with networking. It brings results."

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## Women should be active participants in planning their financial future

Empowering yourself by taking hold of your financial future is imperative especially in today's uncertain economic climate.

Women, who now make up such a large portion of the workforce, are becoming more and more aware of the fact that their participation in goal-setting and investing for retirement years is necessary.

Victoria Bellack, an investment management consultant at Fortune Financial Corp., has been dealing with women's (and men's) needs and concerns for over seven

years. Her experience at companies such as Wood Gundy, Scotia McLeod, Goldman Sachs and Fortune Financial, have made her aware of the pitfalls and problems facing today's women.

"Gone are the days when women could rely on their husbands for financial support," she says.

"The problem is that historically, women have left financial matters to their spouses. We all know that women typically outlive men so, when the husband passes on wives

are often left feeling intimidated, vulnerable and grappling without experience or expertise in dealing with financial issues."

Bellack's compassion and straightforward manner coupled with her experience and business acumen contribute to making her clients feel comfortable and at ease, she adds.

Furthermore, in addition to advising her clients, she is committed to educating them through workshops and one-on-one quarterly meetings.

"I encourage my clients to consistently ask questions," she says. "I think it's important for them to fully understand the different avenues they can take so that together we can forge the best path to fulfill their goals."

Trust and a solid rapport are also keys to the partnership, she adds. Then and only then, does she deal with the investment planning side.

"Every woman can take the steps to becoming financially independent," Bellack says. "The time to start is now."

Victoria Bellack works with the Fortune Financial Corp. located at 2075 Kennedy Rd. To better understand your investments or to learn new investment strategies call her at 416-412-4254.



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