



High-EQ Networking

by Dr. Ivan Misner

Emotional Intelligence, also known as Emotional Quotient or EQ, is all the buzz. EQ is the ability we have to use, communicate, recognize, remember, learn from and manage our relationships with other people. It is, in effect, the skills we've developed for building our social capital with those with whom we wish to network.

Some people just seem to have a knack for interacting or networking with other people. They have a high EQ. On the other hand, for some people networking is a very uncomfortable process. The higher one's EQ, the more natural it seems for an individual to network. I believe that EQ can be developed, whereas IQ is generally static and not easily improved. This means that you can actually improve your EQ by understanding and applying some important concepts to your networking practices.

So, just what are some of the areas where EQ has an impact on networking skills?

Develop a networking style or system that sets you apart from the ordinary businessperson.

Networking is so much more than just being involved in the usual meet-and-greet routine. Developing a style of networking that's deliberate, habitual and finely developed can be considered developing your EQ in networking. This can be done by reading books and other articles about word-of-mouth marketing and learning techniques that have been successful for others. Applying these tips and techniques takes conscious practice and application before they become habits. The highly skilled networker can be like poetry in motion. You aren't quite sure what just happened, but suddenly you're being pointed in the right direction for a meeting with someone else who can open doors for you—and you aren't even consciously aware that you expressed a need for this introduction! You've just been caught up in the flow of a high-EQ networker.

Network appropriately (honor the event).

Becoming a networker who's sensitive to the event is an important aspect



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of developing one's networking EQ. So many businesspeople who are trying to build their social capital do so with an almost vulture-like intensity. Believe it or not, there are times when it's not appropriate to hand out your business card or ask someone the ubiquitous "What do you do?" Being sensitive to the moment and honoring the surroundings is a nuance in networking that sets those with a high EQ apart from those with a low EQ. There are ways to alter your networking styles in various situations. Understanding how to read the event and network appropriately and effectively is another sign of a high-EQ networker.

Follow through.

This is an area where the high-EQ networker really stands out from the crowd. If we're all honest with ourselves, follow-through is not our favorite thing, but it's something that needs a lot of finesse and demands diligence. What an enterprising networker will do is follow through in ways that surprise and intrigue the other businesspeople he or she comes in contact with. This includes things like clipping a news article about a topic that's of significance to the contact and sending it to him or her with a personal note and another business card. The main thing is that a skillful networker will never—ever—miss an opportunity to follow through after an introduction to a new business contact. Keeping your name, your business' name and your expertise in front of that person is very important and can be done in fresh and interesting ways. And it's important to follow up more than once. Create a reason for re-connecting with that contact to begin developing a relationship with him or her.

Maintain customer loyalty.

Many entrepreneurs focus so much on bringing in new business that they miss the boat on maintaining customer loyalty. Keeping current customers coming back and referring others to you is very, very important for business success and growth! The entrepreneur who understands this and really goes above and beyond to make current customers feel valued, appreciated and very special will find that their customers will come back again and again, and bring others with them to do business with you. There are the normal things to do to foster customer loyalty, such as sending a calendar to a client at the end of the year for the next year; then there are the outstanding things to do to foster customer loyalty, such as taking a client to lunch regularly. Getting to know your clients personally and really making the effort to become friends with each person with whom you do business is an indicator of an entrepreneur with high business EQ.



Emotional Intelligence has a lot to do with setting certain business owners apart from the rest of the pack by becoming stellar networkers. It's more than just "doing the obvious." So much more. By being creative, fresh and surprising, high-EQ networkers can amass a great wealth of social capital and build a really strong and visible word-of-mouth-based business.

I've heard it said that employees are hired because of their IQ, but promoted because of their EQ. To that I would add that a business owner might become known in the marketplace as a result of IQ, but will be referred and promoted by others because of EQ and their ability to use that to develop social capital.

QUESTIONS:

So how do you learn a networking style or system? Can you recommend any specific books and/or authors?

There are some great books on networking out there by people that I really respect: Bob Berg, Susan RoAne, Keith Ferazzi, and Wayne Baker. All four of them have books on networking, social capital, and word-of-mouth marketing but cover different areas. I highly recommend all four of these authors' books.

I'm also fond of some of my books as well. The World's Best Known Marketing Secret is a great book to help people create a word-of-mouth marketing plan. Business by Referral is a very detailed program for applying the referral process. Masters of Networking is a great book to give people an overview of the process of networking with many major contributing authors who have been successful in business and in life. Those four authors and some of the books that I have written would give you a really good sense of several techniques you could pick and choose from so you can start to develop your own sense of style and creativity in developing higher EQ.

It's important when developing your networking skills to remember that it might be awkward at first, and with time it becomes second-nature. You've reminded your audiences many times that it's not Net-sit or Net-eat, it's Net-WORK!

It is Net-WORK. If you go to business meetings and you expect the referrals to fall from the cracks in the ceiling, you're going to the wrong place. You have to learn how to work the organizations to which you



belong. You have to feel comfortable with the techniques and strategies that you read. Reading different sets of materials and picking out ideas that work for your own personality are a great way to proceed in building your own EQ.

You say follow-up is where the High-EQ networker really stands out. The strategies you've suggested would indicate that follow-up isn't about delivering a sales pitch but about furthering that relationship, right?

Follow-up with either a prospect or regular existing clients is very, very important. I view these as touch points. These are opportunities to stay in touch with prospects and clients so that they don't forget who you are and what you do. Oftentimes people ask me, "What's the best way to follow-up with people or to stay in contact with people?"

My answer surprises them. The answer is: "The one you actually do consistently." People often ask, "Isn't a handwritten note the best way to follow-up with people?" As an expert in networking and word-of-mouth marketing, I'd have to say theoretically a handwritten note is probably the best. The problem is if you don't do it, it's not so good. I'm guilty of that. I am horrible at doing handwritten notes to people. So, if you don't do it, is it really the best technique? The answer is clearly no.

There are many ways of following up and staying in touch with your clients. Sending out a regular newsletter, email, and calling them are other ways. One technique that I absolutely love and have been recommending a lot lately is www.sendoutcards.com. This is a great service. You can actually get on the computer and send out a postcard or a greeting card, in your own handwriting with your own signature. You do it all right on the computer and hit "send" and they actually produce the card and send it to the recipient. It's very personal, and it works very effectively.

The bottom line is, the one thing you're actually going to do is the best approach to following up with people. The key is to understand that these are regular touch points for you to stay in touch and to connect with people so that they don't forget who you are and what you do.

It's really about making a connection, not just delivering your sales pitch to them on a regular basis?

That's right. At this point, most people know what you do. They basically know some of the products and services you have to offer, and if they're



interested, they are going to tell you. You don't want them to forget who you are. Staying in touch with them regularly is a great way to do that.

I talked about the importance of sending articles or other information to people. I believe that's a great touch point as well. When you know somebody has a particular problem or need, send them a URL link to an article containing some information that will help them in business. That's a super way of maintaining contact with somebody and helping them without just strong-arming them to buy your products or services.



*Called the father of modern networking by CNN, Dr. Ivan Misner is a New York Times bestselling author. He is the Founder and Chairman of BNI (www.bni.com), the world's largest business networking organization. His latest book, *Truth or Delusion*, can be viewed at www.TruthorDelusion.com. Dr. Misner is also the Sr. Partner for the Referral Institute, an international referral training company (www.referralinstitute.com).*