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Putting professional networking to work for your business

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American Translators Association
The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

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Face-to-face networking for translators

Build your translation practice one relationship at a time



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Poll:

- Do you feel that you are already engaging in face-to-face business networking?
 - YES / NO
- If you answered YES, has networking generated any business referrals for you?
 - YES / NO

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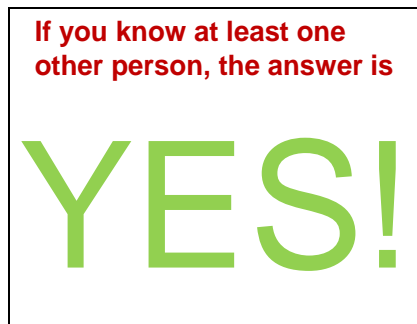
To understand the importance of networking for translators—or any other small business—it is helpful to look at the main alternatives:

- Advertising: print ads in the press, yellow pages, paid directories
- Direct marketing: email marketing, telemarketing

These techniques are “push” techniques where you have to get through a number of barriers just to get an appointment. In addition, direct marketing takes a lot of work to prepare. You have to identify and qualify your contacts to make sure you are reaching the right person, the decision maker.

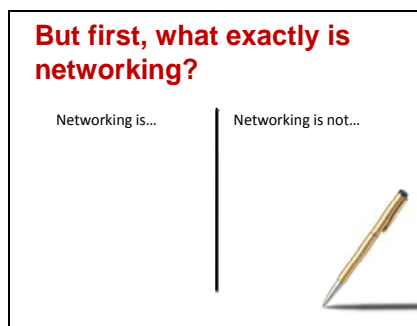
In contrast, networking “pulls” the right contacts to you by generating referrals that send the decision makers to you. This has several benefits, one of which is that it places you in a strong position when it comes time to negotiate your rates and conditions.

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The good news is that virtually no one is starting from ground zero when it comes to networking. If you know even a few people, you have the seeds of your future network.

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Networking is

- Above all, giving
- Sharing information
- Making referrals
- Getting to know people so you can help them
- Building relationships
- Being sincere

Networking is not

- Exchanging business cards
- “Selling” to every person you meet
- Using people
- Taking but never giving back

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Successful networkers follow a few simple rules.

- Be generous
- Be authentic
- Strive for quality
- Don't stray outside your areas of competency
- Treat others with courtesy
- Gain others' trust and give others the benefit of the doubt
- Keep your network open to (nearly) anybody
- Don't be afraid to set limits

Be generous: take advantage of every opportunity to give, do not expect anything in return, especially from the person you are giving to. Networking is not "I helped you out, now you owe me"

Be authentic: when you are not yourself, it has the opposite effect, pushing people away rather than attracting them to you

Strive for quality: give people your full attention when you spend time with them, when you help out make sure it is a good match (referrals), offer to make phone calls for someone, etc.

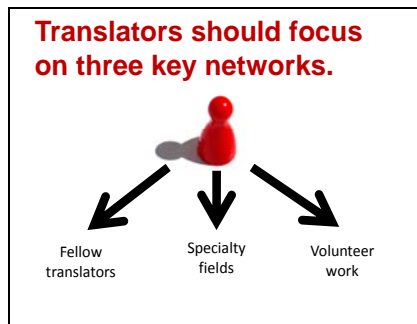
Stay within your skill set: only help out in areas where you are competent to do so

Courtesy: be courteous, even when saying no and even when faced with networkers who cross certain lines

Gain trust and give the benefit of the doubt: call back or follow up if you say you will, etc.

Keep your network open to nearly everybody

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Translators: professional associations, training courses, alumni groups, conferences, etc.

Specialty fields: professional associations, training courses, events, online communities (as a stepping stone to face-to-face relationships)

Volunteer work: can be in a totally unrelated field, the goal is to get to know people

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Audit your network: an excel spreadsheet is good for this.

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Use the results of your audit to set goals.


- Identify gaps to fill
- Ask your current contacts for advice and introductions
- Do follow-up audits regularly



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You need a few basic networking tools.

- Business cards
- An elevator pitch
- Networking events
- A system for managing contacts



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Have business cards designed and printed by a professional.

- What makes a “good” business card?
- Is your business card consistent with your website and email signature? With the way you answer the phone or greet customers?



A “good” business card is professionally designed and printed and fits in well with your other communications.

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Spark a conversation in 30 seconds with your elevator pitch.

- The goal is to recruit your own sales force (not to sell)
- Your pitch should be short, easy to understand and remember, and differentiating
- Rehearse different versions for different contacts and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse



A recommended structure is:

- Who you work with.
- What need they have.
- How you help them.
- An example of a recent project.

Example:

My name is Sara Freitas. I am co-owner of SFM Traduction, a translation company that works with marketing and communications professionals who need to promote their products or services internationally. We help them roll out their international campaigns by translating their materials from French into English or by providing copywriting directly in English. We recently wrote a 100 page energy efficiency solutions guide for a global leader in energy management systems.

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Take full advantage of events to build your network.

- Before
- During
- After



Before the event: find out who is going (LinkedIn, FB, etc.), identify several people you would like to meet and do your homework (find out what they do, recent achievements or changes at their company, etc. and who could introduce you if needed). Connect with people online before the event to facilitate interaction on the big day.

At the event: identify the people you would like to meet and introduce yourself if possible, if you feel uncomfortable play the host or the good Samaritan (coffee, bathroom, make introductions), At breaks

DON'T send text messages, check your voicemail, go outside for a cigarette, engage in other antisocial activities, DON'T stick with people you know and DON'T be a wallflower.

After the event: do any necessary follow up, send emails, send an article of interest, make an introduction. DON'T drop the ball on this one (most people do). Do what you say and you'll stand out in people's mind as someone they can trust.

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Find a system for managing contacts.

- MS Excel
- A CRM
- LinkedIn



You can use: an mail client, a CRM (Customer Relationship Management software like Sales Force, Act, or Ines), or an Excel spreadsheet. It is good to be able to sort by different criteria, closeness of contact, type of contact (suspect, prospect, client, colleague, networking contact, personal contact, supplier, geographical location) and to track your different contacts with each person. That's why we use a CRM, because everything is organized by contact.

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**Now that you have some tips,
get organized.**

- Schedule time each week to cultivate your network
- Make sure you set aside time to prepare for each event and do the necessary follow-up after
- Keep in touch

What three things can you do starting today to boost your network?

Schedule time each week: if you don't plan it you won't do it. A couple of hours spread over the week is good.

Schedule time to prepare and follow up on events you attend.

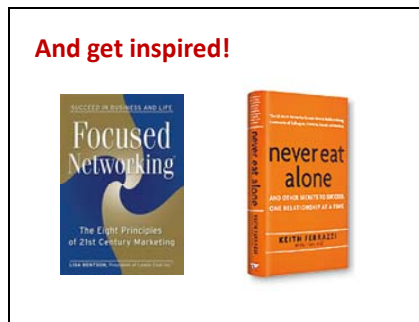
Keep in touch regularly: set alerts, take advantage of travel to touch base with contacts, set different frequencies for different types of contacts, find "excuses" to get in touch (birthdays, congratulations on a recent achievement, recommendations, an interesting event or article), organize select lunches or dinners to introduce your contacts to each other.

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**Get started now by setting
some specific networking goals.**

- **This week:** Write an email template you can use and reuse to request introductions; send it to at least one person
- **This month:** Hire a graphic designer to overhaul your business card
- **This year:** Join a new professional association or volunteer group

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Poll:

- What professional networking strategies do you plan to use, starting today?
 - Inventory my current network
 - Overhaul my business card
 - Register for a professional event or join a new professional association
 - Send an email asking for an introduction
 - None of the above; I don't feel that professional networking is right for me

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Thank you for attending!

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