

Fake smile or not, n

SMILE fixed on the face, business card in the top pocket and right hand extended, he works the room making contact with anyone he thinks will be useful to him. If he mistakenly chats to someone he discovers is insignificant, he quickly murmurs excuses and moves on.

His roving eye is constantly looking for the next opportunity. He makes sure the people he talks to know what a charming and successful chap he is and how his business is really going places. He may forget to ask how they are and how their business is doing, but then life is short when you are in a hurry to get to the top.

This is networking at its worst. Insincere schmoozing, manipulative behaviour and selling are not the genuine article, according to Roy Sheppard, whose promotional literature says he is the foremost authority on people networking.

Good networking requires being interested in others



Management matters

Alison Eadie

and listening as well as talking.

Mr Sheppard launches his four-hour audio learning programme *Network to Win* at a seminar at the Commonwealth Institute in London next Tuesday. He is not name-dropping of course, but IBM, Arthur Andersen and Willis are sponsoring the event and lots of senior business people will be there offering great networking potential for all delegates. By the way do you know anyone who might be interested in booking places?

So what is good networking and do we really have to do it? Mr Sheppard describes it as word-of-mouth marketing to build business relationships.

First you go to events to meet people. Then you keep in regular contact, making sure everyone remembers who you are. Before expecting a payback you must be useful to others and think of ways of helping them. If all goes according to plan you need never be out of work.

"So long as you are professional and competent, your address book is all you will ever need," Mr Sheppard maintains.

It is quite true that the best jobs are not advertised and a great deal of business is done through personal contacts and recommendations. So we should all be networking like fury. But when? The process is so demanding.

Just doing my job and

networking with husband and children keep me fully occupied. How am I to squeeze others I barely know into a crowded schedule?

Then there is the problem of feeling like a creep. Good networking is not supposed to be too calculated, but it has an ulterior motive.

Even the most helpful networkers must feel a twinge of unease when they call in favours. If they are down on their luck, they will find it particularly hard to contact acquaintances they knew in better times and casually ask for a job.

However, it is no good being squeamish and letting the better connected get ahead. When I phoned Mr Sheppard about the seminar he kindly said I was to let him know if there was anything he could do for me in the future.

I made no such offer to him, curmudgeon that I am. I know it makes sense to network, I just cannot bring myself to do it.

www.RoySpeaks.com/london.htm

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