



The Benefits of Networking

May 28, 2015

Networking is all about building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships.

Once those relationships are established, our networks can help us find information that we need to strengthen the work of our groups, identify funding opportunities to enable us to deliver on the purposes of our organisations, and put us in touch with people who can help us further the causes of our associations.

Networking in the 21st Century has evolved from the fast-paced approach often associated with the 1980s and 1990s. Previously networking could often feel a bit like 'speed dating' – a race to hand out as many business cards as possible at seminars, conferences and other networking events – not really taking the time to get to know individuals, find out about what they and their organisation do, and where there might be some synergies between their world and your own.

I'd rather come away from a function with one new contact that I have really had a chance to spend some time with and connect with, than 10 business cards in my pocket for people who I have only spent a few minutes with having a superficial chat.

These days networking seems to be much more about engaging with people, building up relationships and trust over time, and focussing more on collaboration, sharing and thinking about how you can help others, rather than what they can do for you.

And through the principle of 'Reciprocity', this focus on others rather than ourselves, builds a strong network of allies and supporters, that when we are looking for information or assistance ourselves, are usually more than willing to point us in the right direction, give us some advice, or help out in some other way if they can. You know the old saying about good deeds coming back 10 fold – well that's reciprocity in a nutshell!

So when you are meeting new people, really spend the time to find out about them, to understand what they do, and to develop relationships with them, as the more people we share information and support with, the more people we will have to tap into when we need assistance or advice.