



A Circle of Friends: Nichepreneurs® and the Power of Relationships

Even though Nichepreneurs® generally operate their businesses all on their own, it's critical to remember that, to quote the old saying, "No man is an island!" I can't tell you how often this has proved true, in my own career and in that of many of my Nichepreneur® peers. Success comes in large part from forming strategic relationships with people in a position to help you refine and enhance your Expert Identity.

Relationships are key. To succeed as a Nichepreneur®, you want to surround yourself with quality people and form strong relationships with them. I'm talking about real relationships here, ones based in mutual respect and honesty, not exploitive ones devoted to the 'what's in it for me?' concept.

The relationship you form with an industry peer may yield no immediate tangible rewards. However, you benefit immensely from sharing knowledge, getting to know other professionals on a personal level, and forming connections that may be of benefit at some point in the future.

It's impossible to over-emphasize the value of relationship building. Remember, people make business decisions based upon many criteria, one of the most crucial being their relationship with you. If someone feels like they know you, like you, and even value you as a friend, they will be far more likely to send business your way than if they only know you by reputation -- or worse, if they don't know you at all.

Places to begin new relationships and reinforce existing ones include:

Industry Conventions

Every industry has an annual convention, and most have semi-annual regional meetings. These are great places to meet colleagues and peers. Pay special attention to those individuals who appear to be influential -- they may be 'kingmakers', people with the ability to send lots of business your way.

Tradeshows

Tradeshows may be held in conjunction with an industry convention or it may be a stand alone event. One of the last bastions of face-to-face marketing, tradeshows allow you a chance to get up close and personal with players of every size, from the smallest company to the largest mega-corp.

Networking Events

BNI (Business Networking International- www.bni.org) and other networking groups create opportunities of professionals from a wide range of fields to connect and get to know each other. This allows you to expand your circle of influence in unexpected directions and encounter people you may never have met otherwise.



Local Community Group Meetings

Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions Clubs and other local community groups offer a critical opportunity, especially for the fledgling Nichepreneur®. Small, generally friendly circles of local professionals, these groups offer the chance for new speakers to hone their skills and practice effective networking.

Online Industry Sites

Increasingly, professional and personal networking takes place online. MySpace and other social networking sites have transformed how musicians, writers, and other creative types do business. The same is starting to be true in the professional world. Find out where your colleagues, peers, and target audience hang out online and establish a presence there.

Creating and reinforcing strong relationships should be a strong priority for every Nichepreneur®. The better connected you are, to your industry, your community, and your target audience, the more successful you'll be as a Nichepreneur®.

It's critical to remember that people judge you by the quality you keep. Don't be afraid to be selective in your attachments. You only have one reputation, and you'll want to protect it as much as possible. Other people are looking at you the same way: make sure you present yourself in such a fashion that your colleagues and peers will be proud to be associated with you.

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