

## ***It's All About Building ...Relationships!***

*Reprinted Women Builders' Assn Newsletter 11/2009*

And what better time than during the Holiday Season. I'm talking about building relationships through networking. Not the type of networking where men and women in business suits "work the room" handing out their business cards to as many people as will listen to them. Not the type that many networking mongrels are guilty of and networking resisters call "schmoozing," or "back scratching."

The most successful networkers are those who really understand that this lifelong skill called "networking" is all about giving, contributing and supporting others to build and maintain lasting relationships... "without keeping score." They meet, listen to another's needs and give what they can without expecting anything in return. Honestly; no immediate return on investment. After all, *giving* is what this Season is all about.

There so many opportunities to get together with others socially in relaxed gatherings during the Holidays. So go out of your way to be where people are... meet and greet them enthusiastically and if the conversation turns to business, be prepared. If it doesn't, that's OK too. Building relationships has to begin somewhere. Here are some tips for Holiday Networking:

- ✚ Family events, weddings, bar mitzvahs, open houses and parties can be great places to network. Avoid talking about your business or service until you get to know people, though. Ask lots of questions in order to understand how you might add value to their situation. If there is a way to help them, ask for a business card so that you can follow up.
- ✚ Mix and mingle until you meet someone interesting and then spend more time getting to know them (not trying to sell your product or services.) If you make a connection based on familiarity, common interests, etc. ask for a business card and offer to call them AFTER the Holidays. Don't forget to write a note to yourself on the back of their card indicating where and where you met and what you will follow up about.
- ✚ Consider hosting your own event to meet new people and introduce others to your circle of business associates. Bring together interesting people and ideas that can stimulate conversations and information sharing.
- ✚ Don't overlook the "gifts" that come your way on an airplane, elevator in line while traveling or shopping during this Season. Always be friendly, outgoing, and positive. People will be drawn to you.

*Networking is an attitude, an approach to interpersonal behavior rather than an activity, a "thing to do" or an "event to attend." That's why I believe Networking is a skill...and a critical personal and professional skill honed over a lifetime.*

*Sheila Krejci*