

# Networking with Style

By

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What does style have to do with your networking prowess? Networking, or *building and maintaining relationships with others for personal and professional growth*, is a skill that many of us have developed and continue to master. A skill honed over a lifetime. So how does our personal style affect how we network? It has critical implications.

Style can be defined as that unique combination of characteristics relating to how we absorb and process information, make decisions and energize ourselves to continue moving forward. Do these situations sound familiar? Remember that individual you met recently who grabbed your hand and held on so long that you were sure you wouldn't get it back? She looked you straight in the eye as she introduced herself. Her direct approach was somewhat startling as you prefer to step back, observe and listen before letting people get to know you.

Or how about that person at the meeting who wouldn't agree to the group's decision even after two hours of discussion! He wanted to see more sales data. As if that would make any difference! And then another colleague was so concerned about including him and not hurting his feelings, that she suggested postponing the decision until next month. What a waste of everyone's time!

Examples of differences in approach don't make us good or bad, right or wrong, productive or non productive. Differences in approach are just that; different. It's our understanding and willingness to adapt to others' styles situationally that determines our effectiveness in business. Assessment tools such as the DiSC®, Myers Briggs, Working Styles or Insights help us to more fully understand our personal style which is the first step toward building more satisfying, successful relationships with others personally and professionally.

So; what about networking?

Consider that people of all styles will be gathering at the upcoming seminar, the staff meeting, the monthly luncheon, the sales meeting or the social event of the summer. Each of these events is a potential networking opportunity. It is in our best interest to learn as much as we can about others' styles and unique preferences. This allows for the best interaction among everyone involved to insure we meet their needs and ours.