



Sharpen Our Skills

**10 “Gives” for Your Referral Partners
S.O.S. Class 13
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Scenario: “I want to help, but I don’t know anyone who needs what they sell.”

Answer: Does that sound familiar? Most people have that as their stand-by excuse for not reaching out and creating deeper connections with those they meet at the networking event. They know that ultimately they want something from that potential connection — clients, a job, donations, whatever — and if they don’t have anything to give in return they feel like they are begging. News Flash: No one can give a client referral to every person they meet. Sometimes you just don’t know the right people. Sometimes you do, but you don’t know they need it. Sometimes you don’t even understand what your potential connection may be able to offer. Whatever the reason, understand one thing: You have more to offer than you think.

Give them your attention. As I noted, you might not even know what they can do or what they need. The first action you can take is simply to find out more about them, what they do, who their perfect client would be, what challenges they might face, and what long-term plans they might have. Don’t assume you know everything about their business.

Give them moral support. A person who runs their own business (especially when they are just starting out) can feel like a lone voice in the wilderness. Yes, we need the self-confidence to push through the obstacles, but hearing someone else cheering us on for our successes can refill the tank when things are getting hard.

Give them tools. Are they complaining about the pile of cards on their desk? Maybe you could recommend a card scanner app for their smart phone. Are they getting too much spam email? Maybe you know of a spam elimination service that might help. Take a look at all of the tools you use every day. There’s a good chance that your networking partners might need one or more of them to make their lives go a little more smoothly.

Give them opportunities. Maybe you don’t know their clients (and you aren’t one yourself), but you might find out about a potential speaking engagement where they would be a good fit. Maybe the local business radio host is looking for people



Do they write? Perhaps you could connect them with the local newspaper or the editor of a company or association newsletter.

Give them information. Anytime you are reading an article, you should be asking yourself, “Who in my network would benefit from getting this information?” Forward it to them. Would the newsletter for your association be of use to them? Send it along. Maybe you receive a series of weekly networking tips from a highly respected authority on good networking practice.

Give them answers. Perhaps they have some specific questions which, while related to your area of expertise, aren’t something for which you would normally charge (or sometimes even if it is). You can probably get them the answers they need and explain it in such a way that they can understand it far better and far faster than they could manage with a browser and network access to Google.

Give them connections. Maybe you don’t know their specific clients, but you might know someone who *could* connect them. Do an e-introduction or a warming phone call. If you are feeling really generous, take the time to schedule all three of you to sit down together and meet face-to-face.

Give them resources. This isn’t just about money. Maybe they need a location to give a class and you have a training facility. Perhaps their organization is having a charity auction and you have a product you are willing to donate as a door prize.

Give them education. I am seeing this more and more with training programs and seminars. If you buy a registration (sometimes as an “early bird”) you get a complimentary guest ticket. Don’t waste this opportunity! Find someone in your network who would get value from the program and whom you would like to know better. Is there a speaker at the next networking event at the local business association? Do you know someone who would benefit from attending your trade association meeting? Invite them!

Give them their dreams. Remember, networking and the connections we form aren’t only about business. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is to help them achieve a personal dream. Would they like to take a trip to Hawaii? Maybe you just found a low-priced travel option. Would they like to own a classic Corvette? Maybe you just saw one offered on Craig’s List. The light you shine to lead them to their dreams is the same one that can point you to your own.

Be aware of your own worth. As a networking partner you are much more than just a vending machine that dispenses client referrals. You have a wide array of knowledge and resources which you can place at someone’s disposal. Never again worry that you have nothing to offer. Reach out, connect, and give. The more you do, the more others will see you as an indispensable part of their lives and the more they will be looking for ways they can serve you.

Greg Peters, president and founder of The Reluctant Networker, LLC, is a business networking specialist. He has worked with businesses and associations, entrepreneurs and job-seekers to create a world of better connections and greater opportunity. Find out more at www.TheReluctantNetworker.com