

Top 10 Traits of a Master Networker

You haven't automatically networked simply because you shook some hands and handed out some business cards. Networking is the process of building social capital. **Social capital** refers to connections within and between social networks and highlights the value of social relations and cooperation.

Here are the top 10 ways to know that you understand and practice building social capital in your networking.

10. You are dedicated to working your network.

Master networkers don't let any opportunity to work their networks pass them by. They manage their contacts with contact management software, organize their e-mail address files and carry their referral partners' business cards along with their own.

9. You demonstrate sincerity.

Friendliness without sincerity is like a [cake](#) without frosting. You can offer the help, the thanks, the listening ear, but if you aren't sincerely interested in others, it will show -- and they'll know it.

8. You are helpful to those in your network.

Helping others can be done in a variety of ways, from simply showing up to help with an office move to clipping a useful and interesting article and mailing it to an associate or client. Master networkers keep their eyes and ears open for opportunities to advance other people's interests.

7. You show gratefulness to others.

Gratitude is sorely lacking in today's business world. Expressing gratitude to business associates and clients is just another building block in the cultivation of relationships that will lead to increased referrals. People like to refer others to business professionals who go above and beyond.

6. You practice networking principles full time.

Master networkers are never formally off duty. Networking is so natural to them that they can be found networking in the [grocery](#) checkout line, at the doctor's office, and while picking the kids up from school -- as well as at business mixers and networking meetings. Master networkers take advantage of every opportunity that's presented to them on a daily basis. They operate in the "givers gain" mind-set and are primarily looking for opportunities for the people in their network.

5. You practice good listening skills.

Our success as networkers depends on how well we can listen and learn from the people in our network. Listening for the needs and problems of others can also position you to engage the services of the people you know. Communicating well takes focus and effective listening.

4. You demonstrate trustworthiness.

When you refer one person to another, there is no doubt that you're putting your personal and professional reputation on the line. Neither you nor anyone else will refer a contact or valuable information to someone who can't be trusted to handle it well. Trust can never be taken lightly, because it plays such a huge role in your credibility.

3. You are enthusiastic and motivated.

Think about the people you know who get the most referrals. They're the people who show the most motivation, right? It's been said that the best sales characteristic is enthusiasm. To be respected within our networks, we at least need to sell ourselves with enthusiasm.

2. You show a positive attitude.

A consistently negative attitude makes people dislike being around you and drives away referrals; a positive attitude makes people want to associate and cooperate with you. When you are positive, you're like a magnet; people want to be around you.

1. You follow up in a timely way to referrals.

This was ranked as the No. 1 trait of successful networkers. If you present an opportunity -- whether it's a simple piece of information, a special contact or a qualified business referral -- to someone who consistently fails to follow up successfully, it's no secret that you'll eventually stop wasting your time with this person. Following up with what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it, builds your credibility and trust with your network.