

## ***They Just Don't Get It...***

By Kathleen Jennings

Networking...the best way to find a new position, generate business, stay abreast of changes, and to make new business contacts. Everyone know that networking is responsible for more than 75% of people who get hired. But it drives me crazy when people who network to generate sales, just “don't get it” when it comes to their own careers. When I was the leader of a 14-person corporate outplacement firm in California, I was astounded by what some people failed to see.

For instance, I discussed our big monthly networking meetings with a very skilled engineering Project Manager from the computer business. He was very proud of his 4.0 grade point average in EE years ago, but he “doesn't get it” in terms of career movement. He said, “So will there be representatives of hiring companies at this meeting?” Give me a break!

And a very accomplished financial manager with a fast track record in one of the (then) Big 6 accounting and international consulting firms told me, “All I'll meet at this are other people who are looking for a job. How is that supposed to help?” She “didn't get it”.

And how about the very senior level corporate communications executive who called up to cancel on the day of our networking function at the Hilton? He said, “I've accepted a new position, so I don't need to come anymore.” Did he “get it”? Of course not!

One time a presenter spoke on “Should You Own A Business”. Somebody said, when I asked him why he wasn't there, “Well, I'm not really planning to buy a business, so the speaker probably wasn't going to have a message for me.” Networking professional meetings are not about the speaker; it's about the contacts! He “didn't get it” either.

Some things never change. Flash forward 8 years. I now do private coaching for executives and no longer host monthly gatherings for 120 people. Yet I stay involved, particularly with a group where I am a founding member. Last month I ran into a former client who took an excellent position. He joined a struggling firm, helped to turn it around, and managed the successful sale of the company. He said, “Now I need to start networking again, so here I am!” He “didn't get it”, even though he knows better.

To get the most out of the monthly events, it seems to me that people should:

- Show up...regularly...and on time.
- Bring others...and make a bigger group.
- Be prepared to meet others...listen to them...know what they are looking for.
- Share what you know...help with leads, ideas, contacts.
- Arrange to keep the relationship going...you don't have to wait a month to speak again...you can meet by yourselves between meetings.

I expect all the clients of The Jennings Company to be active in networking in the appropriate venues. The people who “get it” can leverage their information, multiply their contacts, and be better prepared to move on an issue where timing matters...a job lead.

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