



4 Steps to Successfully Networking by Michelle Zambos-Duerksen

Hello and welcome I am Michelle Zambos-Duerksen owner of M'n'M Support Specialists and M'n'M Training. I got my start in business thanks to a networking group that helped unemployed professionals to return to the work force. I became the executive vice president of this organization and taught over 100 people how to become effective networkers and I wanted to pass my knowledge on to you.

About 80% of all jobs are found through networking directly. I personally have found it to be the same for my business. All of my clients except for 1 have come to me as a result of networking. They have found me by either my direct networking with them or through others that I have networked with.

I am going to give you 4 steps to network effectively both online and In person. I have been networking my business since day 1 and have truly found it to be the best way to get clients.

I. Step 1 - Project a professional image

A. Online

1. Do your research. Take the time to go through the archives of past messages before you ask a question that has been asked and answered before. One of my biggest pet peeves is when someone new comes on board and ask a question that I and others have answered over and over again. I will still answer their question but I get a negative impression about them first. How can I trust this person to help me out if they can't do their own research?

B. In Person

1. Dress appropriately for the event. It is never a good idea to attend any professional event in blue jeans even if the industry lives in them. When I go to a trade show or a networking event I will wear slacks and a blouse. I like in person networking because it forces me to get out of my jeans, to style my hair and to wear make up. I feel more confident when I do this.
2. While at the event don't sit there and complain about the way it is organized. I attended one last month where this "Business Coach" complained the entire time about having to pay \$10 for the event that is listed on the website and all over Ryze's pages. She complained that it was in the lounge of a hotel and not in an actual conference room where you network by going around the table and giving your elevator speech. First of all conference rooms cost money and if you don't want to pay \$10 how are you going to pay \$50 for the room. I was so turned off by this person that I didn't even talk to her all night. I have clients from time to time that are looking for business coaches but I would never refer someone to her. At the same time that she is complaining there was another coach there that was professional listened to the needs of others

freely gave advice and helped them out. She is the one that everyone gathered around to hear what she had to say. She showed her professionalism and her knowledge in her customers needs.

II. Have contact information handy

A. Online

1. Have a powerful signature line. Look at Heather Jacobson's signature line for her business - "Market Your business for just pennies on the dollar, contact me to find out how" and then has the links to ValleyVA, her book and VA Training. She uses this one for most of her emails and they contact her to learn more about her services. More than half of her business has been obtained by her signature. Your signature box should be less than 8 lines as you don't want people to be bored or not able to find your contact information. It should contain ways for them to contact you and a link to your website.

B. In Person

1. Have professionally printed business cards made. Design them yourself or have someone else design them. If you use Vista Print get the professional ones with your design do not use the templates. Even if the templates are not used they have been seen by many people who use them. It is so worth the additional \$10 to have your own design. Also add your services to the back of the card. If you are at an event talking to someone about your services and hand them your card, they may know someone who can use you and pass your card on to that person well that person won't know what you can do for them because you didn't talk to them directly. At least with your services listed on the back they will have a better idea of what you can do and want to know more by either contacting you directly or going to your website.

Your cards should include the following: Business name, your name, telephone, web address, and email. That is all that is really needed for a VA. Remember we do all of our work through the internet and the telephone. I also include my fax number so that way it is easy for them to find it if needed.

2. The other thing that is needed for in person networking as a powerful elevator speech. I have a great outline that will help you to develop one. While you may change your style the biggest thing is to go with the basic outline. Who you are, what can you do for them, give an example, and close it. If you want a copy of the outline you can find it in the forum by doing a search for Elevator Speech.

III. You need to get involved in your networking events.

A. Online

1. When you join a new group online don't just walk in to a forum and say Hi my name is so and so and these are my services if you are interested then please contact me. You need to get in there and show your expertise. Answer the questions that people ask. Show people that you have done your homework. About a month ago I got a request from someone that I have never heard of and she was referred to me from someone that I had never heard of at a forum that I don't belong too. She was told to see me about helping her out with her Outlook issues. The only way I got this call was because I have posted many times in different areas about how to use Outlook some tips and tricks with in the program. I have shown my expertise in the application. If I hadn't have done that then the person that referred her to me wouldn't have known that I could do the job.

This week I asked for 2 things one was a one page website. Only 2 people responded to my requests. Yes it was a volunteer thing but who do you thing I am going to call on the next time I have a paying need to get a website done? Either one of these highly involved people who volunteered to do the site.

For my other request I asked for three things from people. Out of the 6 that responded only 3 of them gave me the requested information. 2 of them are involved on the board. I went with the one that another highly respected VA uses from time to time because I can trust her. The 3rd one that responded I read her writing and with in the 1st paragraph I (Me) saw 3 mistakes, and she isn't involved in the message board much so I chose to go with the one I felt I can trust the most.

B. In Person

1. It is the same thing when networking in person. Get involved and show your expertise. Remember earlier when I was telling you the story of the complainer and the other coach that gave advice. She listened to people and what they were saying and how they were struggling with aspects of their business. She gave free advice that was very valuable over and over again. She was the one that everyone wanted to talk too. She was involved but she wasn't selling her services she wasn't saying give me a call and I will help you out she just gave the information. It leaves an impression and people will remember that for the next time they need help and will call her to use her services.

IV. Follow-up

A. Online

1. This is the hardest area to follow-up on but you need to. While I will respond and give an answer to a question asked online in the forum, I will usually follow-up with in a day to see if they were able to get their issue resolved and if not help them out. Again I will give free advice to help them out. They will then remember me the next time and come to me with their issue willing to pay because they know I can help them out the fastest vs. waiting for responses that may not even come from the Message boards.

B. In Person

1. When I get back home from an event I will write a HAND Written note to the participants that I really want as clients. I don't do hand written to everyone if there are more then 20 participants there just the ones I really want to work with. Less then 20 then yes I will follow-up with everyone in participation though using an actual snail mailing I will just type something out instead. I will hand write and hand stamp the envelope though. My response will include something that they stated they needed help with or struggled with and what they could do to solve the issue or who I know that can help them out with their needs. I do this the next day at the latest. About a week later I will follow-up with another typed letter to see how they are and to give them information on to my company. This is really truly the first time that I sell my company. About another week later then I will send them a brochure, next would be an email saying looking forward to seeing you again next week. I just keep sending things that I find that may help them. I always remember their needs and what they struggle with. They will remember me when the time comes. After the 1st month of first meeting I will send something every 2-4 weeks just to keep my name out there but not to be pushy. This is where knowing your target market comes in to play.

The biggest key is to follow-up after any event either online or offline.

So there you have 4 steps to networking successfully. Are there any questions?

09:35:47 [mlzambos] Okay now I will wait while you all catch up.

09:36:03 [KarenB] ?

09:36:27 [mlzambos]

09:36:44 [mlzambos] Karen

09:37:32 [KarenB] Michelle, so in the example of the "lousy business coach", I believe your message was that there's a vast difference between emotional intelligence and a huge array of technical ability?

09:37:37 [Laurie] ?

09:38:21 [KarenB] Done with my question!

09:38:26 [Paula_W] That was great information, Micheele

09:38:39 **[mlzambos]** Yes, but the biggest thing is that even though you may not be happy with the way things are don't voice them there in public do it directly with the coordinator in private.

09:39:10 **[KarenB]** Thank you, Michelle.

09:39:28 **[mlzambos]** She may be a great coach and good at her business but I didn't want to find out. I was so turned off by her attitude.

09:39:37 **[mlzambos]** Does that answer your question?

09:40:15 **[mlzambos]** Laurie go ahead with your question?

09:40:32 **[Laurie]** So, can you describe a typical day at a tradeshow? What types of things are discussed? Do you wait for people to come up and ask questions? What do you give away? What do you recommend?

09:40:38 **[KarenB]** Yes, Michelle, it reinforces that despite one's talents, if you turn people off and appear not to care about their needs, there's no way they're ever going to look to you for support.

09:41:56 **[mlzambos]** Laurie I attend trade shows as a participant and not as a vendor. As a vendor though I will have my company information in big display boards that will stand out.

09:42:34 **[Laurie]** What do you think about attending as a vendor?

09:42:40 **[mlzambos]** I find out what their business needs are. And ask them questions about what they don't like doing.

09:43:28 **[mlzambos]** I don't do the slezee car sales gig of calling people over. I do stand and not sit I will be in front of my display table not behind it.

09:44:02 **[mlzambos]** I want them to feel like they can come up to me and ask me questions that I am approachable.

09:44:25 **[mlzambos]** I am all up for attending as a Vendor if it fits the budget and it is the right show.

09:45:28 **[mlzambos]** Attending a Job fair is no good if you are looking for clients, while for me being a vendor at one for contractors my be beneficial as that is my target market.

09:46:19 **[Becki]** i've attended tradeshow as a vendor, can i give some input?

09:46:34 **[mlzambos]** You need to find the right venue. I attend trade shows as a participant looking for potential clients and asking them how business is. Where do they want to do. What would they be doing if they weren't that day.

09:46:41 **[mlzambos]** Go for it Becki

09:47:11 **[Becki]** if you go to a tradeshow as a vendor, i would tag team with a partner...one person at the booth and the other making rounds to different tables and mingling with the people

09:47:33 **[Becki]** if you see alot of people at your booth, then kindly excuse yourself from the conversation and go to your booth to help your partner

09:47:53 **[Becki]** dale and i have a tradeshow display that we use and the cost was about \$400

09:48:03 **[mlzambos]** Oh I so agree. I did this once with a client of mine. I was selling people on his business while he was selling them on mine.

09:48:09 **[Becki]** but you can do equally nice work doing the set up yourself

09:48:12 **[Meisha]** ?

09:48:24 **[Becki]** as far as giveaway items it depends what you are trying to attract

09:48:43 **[Laurie]** What makes up a tradeshow display?

09:49:02 **[Becki]** we gave away golf tees and tea bags along with a card that said "get a little extra tee time" or "get a little extra tea time"

09:49:18 **[Becki]** we have a 4 color banner

09:49:43 **[Becki]** we also have two 6 foot tall by 4 foot wide plastic and fabric displays

09:49:57 **[Becki]** we change out some of the materials depending where are going

09:50:03 **[Becki]** we have case studies

09:50:09 **[Becki]** testimonials with pictures

09:50:14 **[Becki]** samples, etc.

09:50:42 **[Meisha]** mlzambos> I have to step away from the computer...does she have pictures she can share w/ the forum?

09:50:43 **[Becki]** display boards vary accoridng to what you want to get across

09:51:18 **[Becki]** i will have to check meisha...i am famous for not getting film developed

09:51:20 **[mlzambos]** Anything that can sell your company even if you are busy answering questions with others.

09:51:43 **[Becki]** exactly michelle

09:52:08 **[Meisha]** sorry Becki...I thought I was PMing...I didn't want to interrupt

09:52:12 **[Becki]** a 6 foot by 3 foot 4 color banner from kinko's was only about \$80

09:52:22 **[Becki]** that was one of the best investments we've ever made

09:52:29 **[Laurie]** Thanks guys! I think I see a way my husband can be involved with my business.

09:52:44 **[Becki]** so even if you make the booth materials yourself, spend the money on a great looking banner

09:52:52 **[Becki]**

09:53:13 **[coxadmin]** ?

09:53:26 **[mlzambos]** Okay sorry my dail up kicked me off

09:54:08 **[mlzambos]** Glad to hear it Laurie.

09:54:18 **[mlzambos]** Lynn ask away

09:54:55 **[mlzambos]** Meisha did your question get asked?

09:54:56 **[coxadmin]** Would it be a good idea to feature different services in your elevator speech?

09:55:24 **[mlzambos]** Yes. My elevator speech changes depending on who I am talking to.

09:55:33 **[coxadmin]** I'm joining a group that meets twice a month and think it would be good to vary the speeches

09:55:50 **[Meisha]** Michelle, yes it did...I tried to whisper it to you since I was going to step away...but, that didn't work...I was asking Becki if she had pictures to share of the display

09:56:05 **[mlzambos]** I don't want to talk about bookkeeping if what they are looking for is someone who can use MS Project.

09:56:29 **[coxadmin]** that's what I was thinking

09:57:15 **[mlzambos]** If you are in a group where you go round the table then you want to change it everytime you are there. One month it may be about writing, the next month it may be about webdesign.

09:57:30 **[mlzambos]>[meisha]** Glad it got answered.

09:58:08 **[mlzambos]** The other reason is so that people will first of all not get bored and secondly to reach everyone eventually.

09:58:50 **[mlzambos]** Lynn does that answer your question?

09:59:00 **[coxadmin]** I was concerned about people getting bored

09:59:05 **[coxadmin]** yes thanks

09:59:27 **[PattyD]** ?

09:59:31 **[mlzambos]** I only give one aspect of my company services each time.

09:59:43 **[mlzambos]** Go ahead Patty.

10:00:22 **[PattyD]** I don't want to be rude and not listen to people as to what their wants are. Do you jot down info (what they're looking for) on their bus card or notebook?

10:00:49 **[PattyD]** after they're done?

10:01:35 **[mlzambos]** I do. I will step a side and make a side note as to what there needs are. I need that information for my follow-up.

10:02:20 **[PattyD]** my thoughts exactly

10:02:26 **[PattyD]** thank you

10:02:36 **[mlzambos]** Being an introvert one of the biggest ways I decompress after an event is I will go and grab a bite to eat. There I will make my notes of the event and plan my follow-up attack.

10:03:32 **[mlzambos]** I even do it while they are talking. If they list a service that is of interest then I write it down immediately so that I don't forget it.

10:03:52 **[mlzambos]** I may not be able to read what I wrote but I write it.

10:04:15 **[mlzambos]** Patty does that help you out?

10:04:23 **[PattyD]** yes - thank you

10:04:28 [mlzambos] Are there any other ?

10:05:30 [mlzambos] I can go all day. I love to network once I get in the mind set to do it.

10:06:00 [KarenB] ?

10:06:37 [mlzambos] Yes Karen

10:06:54 [mlzambos] Mike says bye to everyone, have fun and don't work too hard.

10:07:47 [mlzambos] Karen go ahead with your quesiton

10:08:36 [KarenB] I'm assuming there's a time limit to this chat and was wondering if there were any other subjects to be discussed, because I also could go all day. I'm not too familiar with the protocol.

10:09:22 [KarenB] This is a fascinating subject, Michelle, and I didn't want to ask too many questions!

10:10:29 [mlzambos] The set scheduled weekly times for general are 8-10 AM EST most of the time we end at 12N. We do the scheduled topics for 1 hours as to not take up too much time of the presenter. We just end when ever everyone is ready to go. So really no end time.

10:10:50 [mlzambos] Oh ask a way Karen I look forward to it.

10:11:07 [KarenB] Excellent!

10:12:16 [mlzambos] I must have put everyone to sleep today.

10:12:35 [PattyD] ?

10:12:39 [Meisha] No, I'm just multitasking....

10:12:44 [Meisha] I'm not asleep!

10:12:55 [Paula_W] me too, sorry

10:12:57 [mlzambos] Go ahead Patty

10:13:01 [Paula_W] I loved the topic

10:13:07 [KarenB] Here's my other question. Seeing as the "Virtual Assistant" business in general is new...there's one of our members (kudos to him), who contacted the Yellow Pages and asked whether there was a category to advertise

10:13:11 [KarenB] Unique to us...

10:13:13 [PattyD] If you go somewhere as a participant, shouldn't you have business cards handy just in case you might find that perfect client?

10:13:16 [mlzambos] That is fine. I figure you were multi tasking.

10:13:30 [KarenB] It appears there isn't

10:14:34 [Becki] if you do decide to take the leap into the yellow pages, i would advertise under a category that people are familiar with

10:14:54 [devina121] I'm listening too Michelle...This is too interesting of a topic to put anyone to sleep

10:15:01 [Becki] since virtual assistant just isn't in the mainstream vocabulary...yet

10:15:02 [mlzambos] Karen you are right there isn't anywhere specific and under stand VA is the least commone search term. Most look for Admin Support or secretary so that is where your Yellow page adds need to be.

10:15:24 [mlzambos] Patty you should always always have Business cards on you no matter where you go.

10:15:30 [Laurie] ALWAYS have your business cards with you!

10:16:07 [mlzambos] I have handed out my business cards at the Post Office, Grocery Stores, Wal-Mart

10:16:19 [KristenVH] the gym

10:16:25 [mlzambos] You never know where you will meet that next potential client

10:16:27 [PattyD] I take mine to the bowling alley on Friday nights

10:16:35 [Laurie] My husband puts my business cards all over town.

10:16:38 [KarenB] ?

10:16:51 [mlzambos] Go for it Karen

10:17:00 [Laurie] I'm going to a conference (for school) next week in Denver and I plan on taking lots of cards

10:17:14 [mlzambos] Heather has magnetic ones on her car even

10:17:20 [KarenB] lol...thx Michelle. I was wondering whether we should be more aggressive

10:17:45 [KarenB] I mean in terms of telling our potential clients that the internet is safe

10:17:58 [Laurie] Sorry, I thought we were in a general chat now - didn't mean to step out of line.

10:18:06 [mlzambos] Don't be too aggressive you don't want to turn them off.

10:18:14 [KarenB] how so, Michelle?

10:18:29 [mlzambos] No you are fine laurie we can do general chat also.

10:19:05 [mlzambos] Don't over sell your company. Don't be the pushy sales men that everyone hates.

10:19:25 [mlzambos] I give them examples to show that the internet is safer.

10:19:29 [Becki] as far as being aggressive it's ok to an extent, but the most important thing is building relationships

10:19:41 [Laurie] Well then - let me officially say you did an awesome job as presenter and host of the chat topic today!

10:19:50 [mlzambos] Did you know that online banking is safer then going to the ATM or the actual bank.

10:20:10 [Laurie] I do eveything online.

10:20:23 [Laurie] I think if there was a way to live online, I'd do that too!

10:20:28 [KristenVH] I second that Laurie, very informative Michelle. Thank you!

10:20:31 [mlzambos] Banks protect your ATM/check card better then they do actual checks.

10:20:33 [Becki] lol laurie...me too

10:21:03 [KarenB] Michelle, can I summarize what your lesson today taught me?

10:21:05 [mlzambos] It was my pleasure. I am still here for quesitons if anyone has any.

10:21:11 [KristenVH] If only I could get the internet to do the laundry.

10:21:27 [Laurie] and the dishes!

10:21:28 [mlzambos] Go for it. I would love to hear what people gained from it.

10:21:33 [devina121] I totally hear you Kristen

10:21:33 [KristenVH] yes!

10:21:34 [Meisha] Michelle, I have one that is off topic...

10:21:41 [mlzambos] lol mopping for me.

10:21:47 [Meisha] I have been meaning to post this one to the board..

10:22:03 [Meisha] How do you handle the "partnerships"..

10:22:07 [mlzambos] Go for it Meisha.

10:22:18 [Meisha] Let's say you partner w/ another person to provide a service....

10:22:21 [KristenVH] Michelle, for me this solidified the follow-up process. I wasn't sure what was appropriate and now I'm much clearer on that.

10:22:24 [mlzambos] What kind of Partnerships?

10:22:35 [Meisha] is it basically subcontracting even when you show them as your team?

10:22:43 [Meisha] Do they need their own business identity...

10:22:53 [Meisha] How is payment received?

10:23:24 [Meisha] Well, let's say that I have several people I know personally who can do Graphic Design, Web Design, Software Training

10:23:28 [Laurie] All of that is between you and the person you sub out to.

10:23:42 [mlzambos] If I bring in a partner under my business and pay them a % of all my profits then they are a partner. But if I sub them the work and only pay for the work they do then they are a sub.

10:23:49 [Laurie] Ideally, you would offer the service and then tack on a percentage.

10:23:49 [Meisha] so, it would be subbing...

10:24:07 [Laurie] Good point - partner vs. sub - big difference!

10:24:14 [Meisha] Oh, Ok....thanks...the check would be written to me and I would pay the sub the agreed price

10:24:26 [mlzambos] Subs should have their own identities.

10:24:39 [Laurie] Make sure they know what they're doing though - it's your business on the line.

10:24:41 [Meisha] ok...

10:24:41 [mlzambos] correct Michelle

10:25:09 **[KristenVH]** Gotta run and get some lunch and finish my day folks. It's been a great chat. Learned lots. Take Care.

10:25:25 **[KarenB]** Here's what Michelle's lesson taught me today. Be real, be sincere, don't promise more than you can deliver, but be "in their face" (in a nice way). It's a very fine balancing act, I think.

10:25:26 **[mlzambos]** Very much my business on the line if I sub it. As a partner then it is both of our businesses on the line.

10:25:40 **[Meisha]** bye Karen

10:25:47 **[Meisha]** oops..I meant Kristen

10:25:56 **[mlzambos]** Have a great day Kristen

10:25:56 **[KarenB]** bye Meisha!

10:26:32 **[devina121]** Alright Ladies, I need to leave now too...it was a very informative chat...Thanks a lot.

10:26:48 **[mlzambos]** It is a very fine balancing act, and the more you practice it the better it gets and the easier it gets.

10:26:51 **[devina121]** Have a super nice day

10:27:01 **[devina121]** Michelle, where do you store an archive of this chat?

10:27:02 **[mlzambos]** Thanks for stopping by Devina

10:27:18 **[Meisha]** bye Devina

10:27:22 **[KarenB]** Yep, I agree Michelle.

10:27:28 **[Meisha]** Hi Heather

10:27:29 **[HeatherJ]** yay i'm right on time....ROFL

10:27:54 **[devina121]** Bye all

10:27:56 **[mlzambos]** If you go to the pinned Weekly chat secheduled there is a link to the archives files. Also there will be a link in the chat topic page for this one.

10:28:08 **[mlzambos]** ROFL

10:28:14 **[mlzambos]** Hi HJ

10:28:29 **[HeatherJ]** alo

10:28:30 **[Laurie]** I really enjoyed and am motivated by the discussion on tradeshows. Portland Oregon is a hot spot for all sorts of professional conferences and I could see this being a very lucrative marketing approach.

10:28:54 **[mlzambos]** And soon it won't be the FTP file tree it will be an actual website.

10:28:54 **[devina121]** Thanks Michelle...Have a nice time

10:29:03 **[joy]** thanks for everything Michelle. Bye all.

10:29:20 **[PattyD]** michelle, not sure but i think we had 17 in here all at once! good job!

10:29:45 **[mlzambos]** Thanks I saw 16 and had 19 for the whole day.

10:29:48 **[Meisha]** yes, great job Michelle!

10:29:51 **[KarenB]** I think for most of us is that we truly believe we have amazing value-add potential, the tough part is selling that to our clients, because we can't always meet them face-to-face. Michelle has done a great job in showing ways in which we can do that.

10:30:02 **[HeatherJ]** yes, great job michelle!!!!

10:30:04 **[mlzambos]** It was fun. I love networking.

10:30:06 **[coxadmin]** Thanks Michelle - that was useful

10:30:08 **[PattyD]** thanks michelle - gotta run

10:30:08 **[Becki]** i am going to run

10:30:12 **[Meisha]** Michelle, what cool things can we do in here...you "whispered" to me..but, when I tried it it didn't work

10:30:20 **[Becki]** have a nice day everyone and make it prosperous!

10:30:36 **[mlzambos]** By Becki

10:30:53 **[mlzambos]** to wisper type /to Name Message

10:31:23 **[mlzambos]** We can save the chats with in the past 96 hours by typing /save

10:31:44 **[Laurie]**>**[mlzambos]** like this?

10:32:14 **[mlzambos]** If there are any changes you want let me know Tawnya is working on the inteface to make changes and wants to know what to change.

10:32:22 **[mlzambos]** you got it Laurie

10:33:04 **[KarenB]** Thank you all for sharing today. I've learned a lot from each of you. VA's UNITE!
LOL

10:33:04 **[Laurie]** Cool - I learn at least 3 new things here every day

10:33:14 **[mlzambos]** I know this light purple background doesn't work it limits our color choices.

10:33:28 **[mlzambos]** That is great everyone.

10:33:56 **[KarenB]** Michelle, you are AWESOME!

10:33:57 **[LauraLee]** michelle, thanks for all the great information

10:34:34 **[mlzambos]** My pleasure. our next one will be Mid april and we will finally have a Male in here.

10:34:41 **[LauraLee]** i love coming here and being able to take this information and really apply it

10:35:00 **[KarenB]** Best success to everyone! Bye for now!

10:35:04 **[mlzambos]** We will still do our regular weekly chats but set topic will be with Dale Noles.

10:35:25 **[mlzambos]** I am glad Laura, Bye Karen

10:35:25 **[Meisha]** woohoooo...a male....poor Dale

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