



Networking and Professional Relationship Articles

Phillip Jones is a Canberra-based social entrepreneur who manages two companies, in addition to be a recognised expert on social and professional networks.

He is the director of *Two Degrees Group*, which provides a range of consulting services including tailored on-demand professional development workshops, discrete professional intermediary services and the design, and the development and management of professional networks for organisations.

He is often invited to deliver workshops on a range professional communication topic and strategies, as well as a being a guest speaker for a range of organisations on professional networking.

Phillip is also the founder of Canberra's most innovative professional and social networking community, *Schmooze* which he founded in 2003. Schmooze offers a comprehensive range of events and business opportunities for its members and guests each month and online including workshops, special interest groups and networking functions.

You can also visit his personal website here at www.phillipajones.com and the Schmooze website: www.schmooze.net.au



Networking Isn't Dirty Word

Google 'networking' and your first result is most likely going to be a Wikipedia article on computer connections. Try, 'professional networking' and you'll get articles on online networking groups.

You have to dig a little deeper for networking in its traditional sense: face to face meeting and conversation.

It's a sign of the times of course, you can Facebook anywhere and anytime pretty much and keep your various personal and special interest networks ticking over and that's all good.

But if you are talking about careers and business opportunities you can't beat the face to face. As human beings we want to connect and feel part of something, and we need that personal contact to form relationships of trust.

Networking is a process, not an event, and it doesn't mean you are all of a sudden trying to sell something or get turned in a commodity. At its best it's a slow-burn thing- a mutually rewarding professional relationship. Like any relationship it takes time to get to know someone, gain trust and understanding and when the times right something may come of it.

People want to do business, or work with, people they like and trust- that knowledge takes time to cultivate.

Our society is full of lots of smaller groups, whether they are based around where you study, work, interests, qualifications and often these 'silos' don't get to meet or overlap. You may also start to find that over time the various groups have distinct internal cultures, maybe even a professional language, making forming common ground and exploring opportunities all the harder. Often groups are inward looking and miss what possibilities may exist outside their silo for growth, learning or expansion.

Organisations like Schmooze create the environment for people from various walks of life to meet, what they make of that opportunity is then up to them.

Its very hard to talk to a complete stranger normally, but a good networking event should make that easy- after all the people who turned up chose to come and want to meet new people- otherwise they'd be home watching TV or something!

Sometimes you network to learn, sometimes you are seeking opportunities, often you can just have a good time- that's allowed! Just be clear about what you are trying to achieve and find the right environment and group that suits your goal. The contacts you cultivate now and maintain will be a real asset in your career- for its always been who you know that makes all the difference to success in any endeavor.