

Networking: Think Social, Not Social Media

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Social media *is* an important networking tool; however, too many businesses are relying only on social media and ignoring the advantages of networking in the *real* world. It's time to embrace physical networking as a way to enrich connections.



Social versus Social Media

Social media is valuable, but it has [social limitations](#). Essentially, the importance of an online conversation can be lost among a hundred other similar conversations. In-person, you'll be able to exchange more information one-on-one. Moreover, a physical encounter showcases your personality in more honest way, which gives you a better opportunity to make a lasting impression.

Not all social media connections lead to lasting relationships. Most of the connections you make online are superficial in nature. A follower on Twitter won't always lead to a sale or lucrative business relationship. If you met that follower in person, you'd have an opportunity to be more social and forge a lasting bond.

Communicating with Body Language

Body language is a powerful communicator, but it's not something that can be utilized in the digital world. Facial expressions and movement give you the opportunity to express information in a physical way, which can only add a measure of positive expression to your communication *if you use it correctly*.

In an article about using body language to secure sales, [Changingminds.org](#) writes: "Getting body language right when selling is a tricky business." The website then advises salespeople to "stand openly" when talking to potential customers, and position your body in a way that is "welcoming them, inquiring of their needs and showing readiness to listen."

Networking and Physical Activity

Physical networking, such as at sporting events, offer the opportunity to bond over victories and losses. Moreover, these events often elicit sentimental feelings in regards to togetherness and [teamwork](#). During the game's downtime, you'll be provided with plenty of opportunities to discuss business and life in general.

Golf is the go-to sport for networking, but softball is another great choice because it can be played on larger teams. The great thing about sporting events is that very little equipment is needed (unlike parties and luncheons where a larger financial investment is needed). Golf is more expensive than softball because you have to pay to play on a green, and most park baseball diamonds are free to use. Slowpitch softball bats, plates, gloves, and softballs--all of which can be found at [Homerun Monkey](#)--cover most of the equipment needed for a softball game. Golf players require golf clubs and golf bats. Some golfers can rent their equipment if need be.

Networking at Outdoor Events

Outdoor events make great networking opportunities because people are more willing to attend events that offer an element of fun. Organize a hike, retreat, picnic, or outdoor luncheon. Bring along some fun gear, such as a volleyball or racquetball set.

Serve food because physical activity leaves people parched and starved. You don't want your guests to leave early because they're craving a bite to eat. Plus, food offers people a chance to sit down together and chat whilst enjoying a snack.

When presenting a physical challenge to networking attendees, make sure it's not so physical not everyone will be able to complete the task. Consider a slow-paced hike on an easy trail. Hikes provide plenty of opportunities for conversation, but that conversation will be limited if most of your guests are out of breath and panting.

Remember: social media isn't the only way to network. There's still a physical world out there, and there's a lot of wisdom in organizing physical events. Making a single strong connection at an outdoor event is far more valuable than 100 weak connections through social media.