

Momentum

Playbook 20

Live and In Person

By Maria Rass

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Playbook 20:

Live and In Person

Dinners with Dorie

Branding expert and author Dorie Clark first came on my radar when I saw a [powerful video](#) about bravely being yourself and not allowing others to define your brand. Inspired, I began following her work: *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes* and *Entrepreneur* columnist, TEDx speaker, professor at Duke University, consultant for Fortune 500 companies.

This woman clearly knew how to build a recognized and influential brand that stands out. And she seemed so.....nice.

In 2014, I boldly reached out to her to offer a free copy of my book, *Branding Basics for Small Business, 2nd Edition*. If you dig it and you have the time, I emailed, I would so appreciate a kind Amazon review. She didn't know me from Adam. But she kindly read the book, enjoyed it, and gave me a lovely review.

We developed an Internet friendship: Sharing posts, retweeting each other, and occasionally emailing. Dorie is seriously one of the most generous people I know.

In 2016, we finally met in person when Dorie kindly invited me to an intimate dinner gathering. She was in town for business and curated a group of interesting and accomplished people who simply "needed to know each other."

It was such an amazing night! I met authors, philanthropists, and savvy business consultants. Dorie even facilitated the lively discussion so we could share both personal and professional happenings.

Dorie is smart and savvy and understands how valuable these face-to-face connections are in an Internet-fueled world. They open doors, build your personal brand and enable you to connect and promote in a friendly, comfortable environment. She organizes these dinners everywhere she goes in the world.

The personal touch cuts through the clutter. Nothing can build your brand like shaking hands, sharing a cocktail and looking each other in the eye. And yes, giving each other big hugs at the evening's end!

Networking can come in all shapes and sizes. But you do have to step away from the computer every once and awhile and connect with people in person.

Get Out There!

You're probably cringing at the thought of networking. Most people do.

You can't just hide behind your screen 24/7 and expect to make a name for yourself. I know, you introverts out there are shaking in your boots, but you can do this in intimate groups or one-on-one, not just at chaotic, crowded conferences!

While you may want to build a global business where clients can come from anywhere and blogs, online courses and videos all have a very important role to play, it's still crucial to engage with people face-to-face, whether in your own backyard, or attending events in other cities.

If you want to increase your visibility and become a recognized expert in your space, make time for face-to-face connections.

Why Face-to-Face in an Internet World Matters

Networking guru, LinkedIn expert and author Sandy Jones-Kaminski and I met in the elevator at a women's business event in Seattle years ago. She is the author of the fabulous little guide, [I'm at a Networking Event...Now What??? A Guide to Getting the Most Out of Any Networking Event](#). While neither of us got involved with this particular group, we connected, followed up with each other (you'll learn more about the importance of this later) and we're now dear friends and valuable colleagues who refer business to each other.

You never know who you will meet at a networking event or how they will change your life.

In a LinkedIn [article](#), Sandy writes:

It's probably no surprise to most modern marketers that online marketing strategies such as webinars, case studies, white papers and videos are among the most effective content marketing tactics. However, it might come as a surprise that, according to a [2015 1500+ person global study by the Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs](#), in-person events continue to rank as the top most effective business-to-business (B2B) content marketing tactic.

It's true! For the sixth year in a row, in-person events are rated as 75% effective compared to second place webinars/webcasts at 66%, case studies 65%, white papers 63%, and then videos at 62%.

The Power of Personal Connections

To illustrate this point further, let me tell you about my friend, Judy.

Judy, who is now a venture capitalist, used to be a very successful marketing strategy consultant for tech companies, charging a very high hourly rate and delivering so much value, she had to turn down clients or refer them to colleagues.

She made well into six figures annually.

And Judy did this for years without a website, blog or social media presence. How? All her business came from referrals.

Judy regularly met face-to-face with colleagues for coffee dates. She attended industry conferences and business events. And she did a great job of delighting her clients so when she asked them for referrals, they were more than happy to endorse her.

Now, I strongly believe every business needs a website. I myself doubt a company's validity if they don't have one, which can seem a crazy bias, since websites are so easy to create. But there's really no excuse not to have a simple splash page, value proposition and contact form on your own URL. Much of what we've learned in MOMENTUM has been about being brilliant online: content marketing, community building social media and online presence. In today's market, this is crucial to success in many cases.

But it's only part of the story. Judy's success proves that networking can be the most powerful marketing tool in your arsenal.

Try One on For Size

How does one choose which networking groups to join? Simple. **Take them for a test drive!**

When I launched my business in 2008, I quickly got engaged with the networking scene. I had many corporate contacts but none in the small business and entrepreneurial arena. There were many groups to choose from but.... which ones were worth my time and energy?

Just like with your marketing plan, you don't have to get involved with every single group out there. Apply the Rule of Three we've discussed in past lessons (or even a Rule of Two!) and focus.

I took a "speed dating" approach. I attended at least one meeting or event from every group that interested me. If I enjoyed myself and the people I met, it made the cut to the next round. If I didn't, I let it go.

Choosing which groups in which to consistently participate is kind of like buying a great pair of new shoes. Some groups fit your style and needs. Some don't.

Outline your “perfect match” and judge based on that criteria, just like dating! For me, I looked for groups or events that were full of fun, successful, high-energy people, covered interesting topics, had a nice mix of peers from whom I could learn but also exposed me to potential new clients.

This last point is very important. People waste a lot of effort joining peer/colleague groups in their industry, which is great for furthering your education, increasing referrals or simply talking shop with your people, but they are less good for getting in front of your target buyers. It’s healthy to network in both peer groups and prospect groups.

You’ll never know which ones are right for you until you venture out and see what they are all about.

Be Authentic and Have Fun!

The goal of networking should not be to shove your business card in everyone’s face. Gross.

Outline your goals for attending an event ahead of time. Keep those goals manageable.

My goal for every event I attend? Connect with just one cool, interesting person. If I learn something new, get inspired or find about a valuable resource to achieve my goals? Even better!

Networking is not about collecting business cards or trying to impress the “right” people. **Be yourself.** My friend, leadership coach Michelle Lederman wrote a book, [*The 11 Laws of Likability: Relationship Networking . . . Because People Do Business with People They Like*](#) which says it all: One of the most important success factors is enjoying those with whom you work.

If you’re not having fun at a networking group, maybe they aren’t the right people for you. You should feel like you’re hanging out with cool people who inspire and motivate you. That’s the only way you will be your authentic self.

Caveat: Have fun but, remember to of course be on your best behavior. You’re creating your personal brand. Focus on your conversation and give people your full attention. Don’t check your phone while others are talking to you (put in away on silent) and go easy on the Cabernet.

Be Generous and Follow Up

Most people hate networking events because they hate talking about themselves. Fair enough.

But it’s not about you. It’s about listening and connecting with others, showing empathy. What can you contribute? With whom can you connect someone?

Approach each networking event as an exercise in radical generosity.

Ask questions. Genuinely take an interest in other people's lives and businesses. What do they do? What are their hobbies? What brought them to the event? What are they passionate about right now? What do they need to move forward? You may find you have a potential collaborator, great accountant, fabulous new book or a relevant article to share with them. Connect the dots and see how you can help people. When you do, they will remember and love you for it!

Immediately after any event, follow up with the people with whom you had good conversations. Don't let this lag for too long or people will forget you. Connect with them on LinkedIn (with a personal note reminding them of how you met!), Twitter or other social media. Send them the article or email introduction you promised within a day or so. And for people to whom I suggest a coffee date? I send them proposed dates the very next day so they know I'm sincere and serious about further connection.

Your Assignment: Get Out There!

List three groups/events that you will check out. Be sure to include a mix of both peer groups and prospect groups, as discussed [above](#). Don't know any? Ask other business owners in your area, or do an online search for "entrepreneur" or industry/topic area MeetUps, communities and networking groups. *Another option:* Identify an industry conference or live event in another city:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Visit the website and sign up for the next event. Put it on your calendar! If you don't want to go alone, find a friend to bring with you.

Practice your elevator pitch! Nothing too stiff, but be prepared with your two to three sentence answer to "What do you do?" so you feel confident and excited to share it with others. Revisit *Playbook 11: Build Your Messaging House*.

Set your intention: What is your goal for this event? Meet one great new person? Gather new bookkeeper recommendations? Find an accountability partner? Learn something new? Outline it here:

Post event, follow up with anyone cool you met or provide any resources you promised!

But wait, you're not quite done....

Please post your networking game plan and upcoming events to the Facebook page by Friday. Maybe we can help you think of other groups to check out! And report back on how it went after you attend.

Remember, we are here to encourage you and provide any feedback. If you're like me, often it's fellow collaborators that help me polish my ideas to a glossy sheen.

Again, I'm going to reward you all year long, so don't lose your MOMENTUM: Post it now and keep that train moving!

One Last Thing...

Networking, like sales, does not have to be gross. Forget what you think you know or what you've seen. You get to write your own rules..

You just have to find your own authentic, fun way of connecting with people—the *right* people—in person. That's what life is all about.

I have attended events where people were indeed pushy and in-your-face. So I never went back. And you don't have to if this is your experience. Not every live event or networking meeting is like this, so do some speed-dating yourself and find where you feel comfortable.

But also follow the tips of being generous and inclusive yourself, and maybe, just maybe, you'll have a different experience.

You will find that, in an age where studies show that humans are increasingly losing empathy because we are on our screens all the time, connecting in person nourishes your soul. A large majority of communication is non-verbal, and nothing beats being able to look people in the eye, see their emotions on their face and perhaps give or receive a comforting pat of support or joyful hug.

Please don't lose human connection simply because it's easy to hide behind a laptop. Find ways to engage in face-to-face contact and your business—and psyche—will be better for it.

So will our world.

Peace out,

Maria

Goodies and Inspiration

To learn more about why and how Dorie Clark organizes her fun networking dinners, so you might do something similar, [please read this great article she wrote](#). If you hate networking events, then create your own and invite people you want to invite!

If networking scares the Bejeezus out of you, please read Sandy Jones-Kaminski's articles on [LinkedIn](#) and [Medium](#) and sign up for her [free newsletter](#). Her tips and insights are invaluable for having fun and getting the most of networking. Her book: [I'm at a Networking Event...Now What??? A Guide to Getting the Most Out of Any Networking Event](#). One age-old question she answered for me: Always put your nametag on you're the right-hand side of your chest, not your left. Her book explains why!

And....her [12 proven tips for how to make the most of your next networking event or conference](#). These are gems. Seriously.

[Michelle Tillis Lederman](#), whom I also adore, is a great resource for enhancing your leadership skills, brand presence and likability. Her book: [The 11 Laws of Likability: Relationship Networking . . . Because People Do Business with People They Like](#).

Speaking of meeting new people: Enjoy the wacky duo of Jack Black and Boy George doing [Hello, I Love You](#) on *Conan*. Starts at 1:20. But I don't advise that be your opening line at your next event. A little direct. Unless, hey, that's how you roll!