

Networking & Why I Hate Selfie Sticks

Business Development Best Practices Series

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I'm going to go out on a limb and confess and unpopular view... I hate selfie sticks. I actually will alienate myself from almost every reader and tell you I also hate selfies. Now, before you stop reading and throw this offensive article in the trash, let me tell you why.

I love networking! Every single little thing about it...from the first uncomfortable conversation to the rewards you reap in relationships built throughout your career, it is, in my opinion, THE most important business skill you can acquire. It's not for everyone and it's not as easy as most think to do it well.

I will give you some of the best tips I have learned in networking all through the reasons I believe your selfie stick is ruining your networking life!

Those Sticks Eliminate Spontaneous Encounters:

Imagine hiking to the top of mountain you have never challenged before or looking out on the vast expanse of the Grand Canyon. These are memorable events for you and all of the events and people leading up to it become an important part of the collective story. It is a little awkward to ask someone to take a picture of you and your friend/family, but worth it! We find out where the new person in our story is from, if this is their first time here and a little bit about them.

Similarly, when we network, we have that initial uncomfortable feeling approaching someone we don't know, but as soon as the conversation is ignited we have the reward of learning more about them and their story. If we don't initiate conversation, we limit the experience at that event. And the best networkers know that you can build your network absolutely anywhere. Don't miss any opportunity.

Selfie Sticks Never Reciprocate:

The very best part of asking someone to take your photo is to then offer to take one for them. If you didn't, it would be considered rude. And in doing so, we learn a bit more about them. My dad, the ultimate friend to everyone, was known for having friends he met in all sort of encounters such as this. Friendships were born and random people became a part of our vacation stories and photo albums.

The best business developer and networker I know I have long described as a person who always gives more than he takes. He comes to a networking event or a one-on-one meeting prepared to share and help. The best part of this technique is that it is so rarely done that it stands out! And yet it is simple—commit to “giving” something in every networking encounter and you will excel at networking.

The Stick Does Not Care about You Afterward:

If I had to summarize my disdain for Selfie Sticks (even the name for them bugs me), it would be because they scream “it's all about me”. They allow you to ask for no help, allows for a photo anywhere, in a vacuum, regardless of surroundings. While, this is obviously not all bad, it eliminates the best of the experience.

Going back to some of my most fond vacation memories, my dad used to take photos with his camera, develop the images and then mail the photos to the people we met. He not only was appreciated by them, but developed long-lasting friendships and business as a result.

Networking is like this; we need to remember that the goal of networking is to create a relationship that can build and trust can be established. Creating a follow up is one of the best ways to prove early in the relationship that you will do what you say you are going to do.

That Stick Does Not Let Us Refine Our Skills:

Predictable outcome with that annoying thing...You want a photo, you use it, you're done! I always love the thrill of finding the person who actually can take the picture without putting their thumb over the lens or who has an eye for photography and will not give up at just one quick snap. And we refine the art of conversation and asking questions and sharing little stories and talking to strangers to bring new thoughts, perspectives and insights in little moments.

That is why I love networking! Because we refine and adjust, learn and grow, share and listen and all the while get more comfortable and confident for the next encounter. How will we get “good” at networking if we don't practice it in the little things...encounters as simple as “Hi there, would you mind taking our picture quickly?”

Networking takes practice, but it starts from small meaningful encounters and practice socially. I fear those little rods are taking what was once required conversation building elements out of our daily lives and I am not happy about it! So put those relationship building thieves aside and begin to socialize with those around you once again. That is an approach that “sticks”! Happy networking!

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