

Networking – Why Bother?

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2013 Garage
Cleaning Event



2013 Pressure
Washing Seminar



Midwest Cleaning Event 2012



2012 PWNA Convention

Most business owners have barely enough time in the day as it is without the thought of spending time talking to other cleaners on the Internet or at events. In fact I've talked to a growing number of cleaners who just want to do their own thing and be left alone. Maybe you are feeling the same way – *why bother?* Let's examine some pros and cons to networking and see if you can benefit from it as a cleaner and/or business owner.

Downsides

First we'll start with what might be considered the downsides of networking (either in person or on the net).

Drama – unfortunately with business owners there can often be personality conflicts that can quickly escalate. Add to this that on social networking sites we often form groups of friends and while this can be good it can mean more people involved in a disagreement between two individuals increasing the drama and conflict.

No emotional fonts – It may seem silly but when we type something on the keyboard there is not always a way for the reader to distinguish the emotional content of your words. This can and often does lead to misunderstandings which in turn lead to more drama.

Anonymity – On some social media sites you often

don't really know who you are talking to. Are they a real cleaner? Are they located in your service area? This factor can lead to a false bravado encouraging the individual to say things they wouldn't if you were face to face which in turn can add to the existing drama.

Time and expense – If we opt for face to face networking at events then we have the time and expense of travel, hotels, food, and taking a couple days off work. Depending on your business model this may or may not be a large issue.

Benefits

Now let's talk about the benefits networking can offer to those willing to accept its limitations.

Hands on experiences – With all the networking events I've attended there is always a portion set aside for the attendees to get their hands on or at least see in person the tools of the trade. This benefit can't be emphasized enough for those who are contemplating adding an expensive tool to the business.

Clear communication – There is something to be said for the ability to talk face to face with cleaners who are facing the same issues (maybe even tougher ones) as you. At networking events you have the opportunity to

get in depth answers to some of those tricky problems you've wanted to ask without having to type out a small novel to get answered.

Global experience – Going back to online networking we get a broader knowledge base to deal with problems or just tweak our business model. For instance not every country has the same standards for cleaning frequencies. Maybe by talking to cleaners in different countries you will try a different approach that could lead to a new market and more money.

Real time answers – One major benefit to online networking has to be the ability to get real time answers. Remember with the advent of smart phones and tablets we have access to our online groups while we are in the field. I know I've been able to email, text, or call (yeah some of us still use phones as phones) when I had a question or problem and I've had many reach out to me as well.

Is It For You?

The answer is – maybe. We all have different goals,

family commitments, values, and time constraints. Too, anything we do in life is only as successful or useful as the effort we put into it. To get the full benefit of networking you'd have to get involved and see for yourself the way it can enhance your business. I'm sure that this article won't sway you into jumping online or booking a flight to the next networking event but maybe it's given you pause for thought. And after all that too is a benefit of networking – knowledge.

Tony Evans and his wife own and operate A New View Window Cleaning, which offers window cleaning, house washing, roof cleaning and scratched glass restoration. He will be hosting the 5th Annual Midwest Conference, July 19-20, in Des Moines, Iowa. Read more about this event on page 25.

3 Tips for “Streak-Free” Business Networking

by Larry Miller, owner of Larry Miller, Inc. & IWCA Board Member

Power networking for your business is a lot like professional window cleaning. It's a skill you learn that gives you an advantage to see opportunities clearly. Networking isn't just about business. It's about building relationships. Today, meeting face-to-face is more memorable and a stronger way of getting to know people. Especially in this fast-paced, high tech environment. Here are three tips I suggest that you use in your strategy to help sustain and grow your window cleaning business.

- 1) Join your local chamber of commerce and become an active member. Participate at networking events where you can meet members, exchange business cards and get to know each other. Find out more about people you connect with and help them find leads for what they're looking for. The more you help them, the more they'll remember you.
- 2) Many chambers also have “leadshare” groups. Find out if your chamber does and go visit one or two leadshare groups. When you find a group that feels friendlier and more comfortable for you, join and start building relationships.
- 3) Get to know more about non-profit charities that have activities going on in your local community. Help sponsor an event that shows you care about a cause and support it. For instance, my company (Larry Miller, Inc.) supports The Daffodil Ball (<http://www.thedaffodilball.com/>) and Habitat for Humanity (www.loudounhabitat.org/).

