

## **Business Networking Evening - A Guide**

This document is intended as a “bullet point” guide to setting up a business networking evening in order to present the concept of Rotary to small business people.

Only two rules in this engagement:

1. “No!” Is not personal. Just because someone has said no to your invitation to attend a meeting does not mean they will never be interested. Just collect their business card and ask if its OK if you get back in touch some time down the track.
2. My advice is, if possible, not to hold the event on a normal club meeting night, otherwise you will have more club members than you want attending.
3. As difficult as this might be, you do not want half the club there.

**The focus of the evening is business networking, not the promotion of Rotary.**

This evening is designed to get people interested enough in finding out more about Rotary to come along to a meeting. They need to determine their own “what’s in it for me?”. This will be different for everyone.

Some people may be very keen to get involved with the local community, or some international projects. Some may see Rotary as a rich source of business networking. These are all valid reasons to attend a first meeting.

### **Arranging the Event**

1. Pick a night for the event where you have a decent guest speaker at the following meeting. There is only one opportunity to create a good first impression, so we should put our best foot forward.
2. Contact the local council, or the local chamber of commerce, as they may already run business networking events that you can piggy back on to as a sponsor. Sponsorship of these events usually means nothing more than providing a venue and paying for drinks and nibbles.
3. Consider using Facebook advertising to promote the event. For not very much money (\$200 is a good amount) you can target small business in your area. If you use Facebook, you will need to have created an ad that sits on your club Facebook page.
4. Ask members to consider forwarding some of their contacts. These contacts then get an email approach from the Rotary Club as an invitation to attend.
5. Letterbox local businesses.

### **The Event**

1. Preferably pick a venue such as a club or a restaurant/function centre.
2. 6pm start - 8pm finish.
3. Don’t have the venue staff serve drinks. People will drink less if they have to go to the bar and get their own drinks.
4. Only provide Beer, Wine and Soft Drinks.
5. Generally, 75% of the attendees will have one drink, the remainder will ask for water.
6. Of the 75% of drinkers, only 30% will have a second alcoholic drink. People are generally very conscious about drink driving these days.
7. Order enough food to cover about 60% of the participants. You will find that you have more than enough.

8. Only ask a few Rotarians to attend. If possible they should be in business and bring their own business cards. People will be much more inclined to talk to you if you have business interests in common.
9. Attending Rotarians should be able to conduct small talk and to network with the attendees. Rotarians standing around talking to each other and having a free drink is not what this evening is about.
10. Get people's business cards, even if they are not interested in Rotary straight away. The approach is to talk to them about their business and what you do, then bring the conversation around to Rotary.

## Speakers

1. If this a Rotary arranged event, then the only two speakers should be
  1. The Club President to welcome guests and hope that they find their "what's in it for me" - do not talk about what the club has done. Max 2 minutes.
  2. John Stockbridge or whoever is giving the Rotary Presentation. This will cover All aspects of Rotary, Australian and WA information and local club information. Max 15 minutes.
2. Whilst it is tempting to drone on about Rotary, people have come to business network. Rotary is simply facilitating this. There is plenty of time to talk Rotary one on one.

## Costs

1. In my experience, costs are dependent upon location but a guide may well be:
  1. Around 50 people - \$800
  2. Around 80 people - \$1000
  3. Around 100 people - \$1500
  4. Around 150 people - \$2000
2. The reason the costs aren't proportionate is that the more people you have, surprisingly, the less amount of alcohol they consume on average per head.
3. The last event run by SDRC at the Gosnells Golf Club had 107 people and cost \$1523

## After the Event

1. Follow Up. Follow Up. Follow Up.
2. On the night you may have some people agree to come to the next meeting, However, you still need to follow up a couple of days prior to ensure that they are going to be there and to encourage them if they seem to have "buyers remorse".
3. For those that aren't immediately responsive, I divide them into three categories:
  1. Follow up in 30 days
  2. Follow up in 3 months
  3. Follow up in 6 months
4. I know that 6 months might seem like a long shot, but I have had people come along to SDRC 6 months after our first contact.
5. There's an old adage in sales which says "it take 7 contacts with a prospect to get them to buy anything." Getting someone interested in Rotary is no different.
6. Don't give up, persist. The more you work at this, the luckier you will become.

Good luck with the evening and don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

**John Stockbridge**

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