



Plan in advance — Schedule regular meetings in your calendar and always be on the lookout for new events or opportunities to find people who can help you. Always have more than enough business cards on hand. Know in advance what types of people you want to meet, how best to explain what you do (in 20 seconds or less), what types of questions you want to ask them and what kind of information you are looking for.

Be ready to give — All good relationships are built on give-and-take. The power of reciprocity—the desire to give back to others who have first given to us—is one of the most effective ways of building a supportive network.

Be ready to share — One of the most powerful attributes of successful networkers is their willingness to share their network with the same fervour with which they are willing to share their knowledge. When you meet a new contact, be the first to share information, such as a referral or valuable information. Next, be sure to follow up to find out how the referral worked out. Practice this principle of sharing and you will be rewarded with loyalty and trust.

Be ready to listen — As a good rule of thumb, you should speak 30% of the time and devote the rest of the time to listening. Monopolizing a conversation is a sure way to miss what someone is telling you he or she wants, and to make your contacts feel unimportant or dismissed.

Best practices for conversations

The most powerful prospecting conversations will occur when you start your sentences with the words of your targeted local contacts. By inserting their language* into your presentation, you will show that you are listening. This, in turn, helps to create powerful relationships based on trust and respect, with a remarkably high loyalty rate.

* By “language”, we do not mean the actual idiom used (e.g. the English language) but rather your contact’s concerns, subjects of interest, expressions, colloquialisms, etc.

1.7 Sustaining your network

It is easy to forget about prospecting when we are involved in the partnering process and other duties. Failure to prospect consistently will result in a reduction in opportunities available to Canadian companies. By committing a set amount of time every day to meeting new people, your local network will soon be richer, and you will be able to build successful partnerships for Canadian companies. Here are some tips to help you ensure your network is always full of leads: