

NETWORKING WITHOUT COMPUTERS

By Carl Light and
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Recently Ottawa has been sporting a new look for its trade officers in the field. It has placed a higher priority on "Market Intelligence". One authoritative source on this subject is Leonard M. Fuld. His thoughts and ideas are eloquently summarized in a book entitled, "*The New Competitor Intelligence*," a valuable resource for any officer.

The clearest concept that emerges from Fuld's writings is that market intelligence is a continually evolving process. It is dynamic. But, as individuals, we all have different levels of dynamism. Whether in speaking, writing or arithmetic, some are more articulate than others. No one or no technology, though, can replace the centuries-old technique of personal networking. Knowing how to make and develop professional contacts is invaluable.

The standard forms of networking are joining professional associations, industry associations, corporate calls or specialized clubs. But do not forget neighbourhood-get-togethers, sporting events (ie. golf), religious events and shopping malls. Each event offers the opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Use these opportunities to your advantage.

Here are some helpful hints that may make you more effective:

- **NEVER COME LATE:** If you can arrive early, you stand a better chance of meeting the people who you want; maybe even the invited speaker.

- **KNOW WHO IS COMING TO THE EVENT:** By knowing who will be attending you can be better prepared.
- **NEVER SELL YOURSELF:** Remember that networking and selling don't mix; your main focus is gathering information.
- **NEVER SIT WITH SOMEONE FROM YOUR OFFICE:** In this way you force yourself to meet others.

Whether you are sitting around a table, or loitering near the beverages, try not to be timid and remember to extend your hand. (Make sure this custom is common business practice in your country.) Talk briefly about your interests in attending the

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function and maybe why Canada needs to be involved in the industry. Also, ask others about their interests both business and pleasure; people love to talk about themselves and their achievements. Finally, asking for a business card may be good protocol. It will allow you the opportunity for an effective follow-up, particularly if there are mutual interests.

These are just some of the ways to develop your networking skills. The best way is through practice. It can help you to be more effective at work which will eventually translate into results for Canada.

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