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# Why networking is replacing cold calling (and why it's more than the numbers)



**Ken Cook**, Contributing Writer  
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I opened two different yet similar emails this morning. The first dealt with a "Speed Networking" site promoting its services. The second email was promoting a "Networking Seminar" that uses a formulaic approach to networking similar to the typical funnel approach to sales.

What struck me about these emails was the focus on numbers. Has networking become the replacement for the old sales mantra of having to make cold calls?

When I started selling more than 30 years ago, my leaders drilled into me that sales is a numbers game. If you make 100 calls, 10 will give you an appointment. The 10 appointments will lead to five proposals, which result in two to three deals. Figure out your sales goal and the average value of a sale, and then work the numbers backwards to figure out how many sales calls you need to make.

#### See Also

- [The importance of relationships: How chickens killed a \\$28,000 deal](#)
- [5 steps to building business through relationships](#)
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#### A new numbers game

Fast-forward to today, where mass marketing has flooded the world with messages. The flood of messages means that our cold calls and direct mail letters are heard even less than they were in the past. In this overcrowded environment, sales people might need to make 200 calls to get the same results as 100 calls decades ago.

The new prescription is networking. The idea is that if we connect with people we can elevate ourselves above the mass messages. By networking, we can hopefully separate ourselves from the anonymity of mass marketing.

You attend an event with the hope of connecting with someone new. That new connection hopefully leads to either introductions or opportunities. To increase your success rate, systemize your networking by being sure you connect with 50 people per month, or around 12 per week, or at least two to three per day.

My issue with this new numbers game is that it feels like the old numbers game, only under a different name.

#### Focusing on relationships, not networking

Traditional networking misses the most important element in the equation — the person to whom we are connecting. Individuals are not numbers in a sales equation. People know the difference between a genuine connection with someone, and individuals who are trying to connect for their own benefit.

Think about the successful people you know. They don't network. They don't sell. They have relationships — genuine connections with people.

Can you be successful with the networking numbers approach? Yes. Will this approach differentiate you? Probably not. The differentiation is tied to the relationship.

Try the relationships numbers approach. Instead of networking with 50 people per month, build 50 relationships in a year. Focus on 50 people who can help you succeed. Get to know the person — his or her interests, dreams, challenges and vulnerabilities. As you get to know those things about someone, you build trust. From trust comes opportunity.

Ken Cook is the co-founder of How to Who Inc. and co-author of "How To Who: Selling Personified." He founded Peer to Peer Advisors, the largest independent peer advisory board services company in New England and spent 25 years consulting with high-growth and middle-market companies, including five years as one of four consultants that Inc. magazine contracted nationally to work with the Inc. 500 companies. Cook has authored three other books and columns for several business publications.



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