The Wonder of Connection Meetings

How to keep your MC3 Connection meeting list full

What is the secret to the success of top Referral groups? It is always easier to give and receive referrals when they attend regular, frequent 1-to-1 meetings. The problem is, unless the process of booking and attending 1-to-1s is handled systematically and consistently, it tends to take a lot of time and effort.

Here is a method of keeping an aggressive, time saving 1-to-1 meeting schedule—so you can generate more referrals while saving a lot of time.

Keeping your Connection meeting list full is not a mystery—nor does it have to be hard work. BNI Connection meetings serve as a one-page schedule for planning meetings with all of your BNI referral partners. By following my method, you'll have more meetings in a shorter amount of time; in return, you will get and give more referrals without nearly as much effort. Here's how it works:

- First, use the Connection meeting process to build a list of all Referral group members. Then prioritize the list to figure out those members with whom you want to meet first. Easy so far, right? (If you haven't heard of the Connection meeting, I recommend contacting our group's mentor or one of our officers. It's a great program.)

- Next, pick a day and a time when you would like to conduct 1-to-1 meetings each week. If you want to have three 1-to-1 meetings per week, try having them back-to-back. For example, Thursdays starting with a 9 a.m. meeting, then a 10:00 a.m. meeting, and then an 11 a.m. meeting. By scheduling each meeting at the same location, such as a centrally located coffee shop, I don't waste time driving from one location to the next.

- Once you have a time block in mind, call or send an email to the first member on the top of your prioritized list and ask them to meet during any of your designated 1-to-1 time slots, even if it's not this week or next week. In my case, I'd say, "Please pick any Thursday at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., or 11 a.m." Once you get the first meeting, do the same thing for the second person on your prioritized list, except eliminate the taken time slot. Continue this process until you have a week or two full.

- When you have your Referral group meeting, bring your list of open time slots and ask the next people on your list if they can have a meeting during one of those open time slots. Again, don't worry if they can't meet until 3 or 4 weeks from the time you ask. Just keep scheduling meetings—but only during your desired time slots. Usually, if you stay ahead of the schedule by two to three weeks, it is very easy to schedule meetings; eventually you'll have scheduled or completed meetings with everyone in your Referral group.

- Here's another trick: At each 1-to-1 meeting, don't leave until you've scheduled your next 1-to-1 with the person you're meeting with. Although it might be 6 to 10 weeks out, that's okay. Tell them, "I really value you as a referral partner and I want to make sure we meet regularly. I don't want to take any chances."

Use this process and you'll find that your Connection meeting gets filled up very quickly. And when your 1-to-1s follow a manageable schedule, you'll give and receive more referrals.