

Three Entrepreneurs Started Three different Businesses

Kelly, Pat and Terry.

Kelly was a financial whiz and knew the numbers forward and back. But Kelly never took a speech class and was shy. It made it difficult for Kelly to talk about the business.

Pat was an engineering guru who had a patented product idea out of the gate. But Pat didn't want to tell anyone about it, because Pat felt they might steal the idea.

And Terry. Well, Terry did only so-so in the classes. Terry needed someone to help with the accounting. And Terry's business model wasn't really all that unique. But Terry had a lot of business friends. Everywhere Terry went, Terry knew people. Terry connected with people.

So Kelly, Pat and Terry. Which entrepreneur was successful?

GOOD MORNING FELLOW ENTREPRENEURS!!

Who here has a business? Is thinking of starting a business? Is only here for a class credit?

Did you ever attend an event where the person you've been dying to meet, the person who could provide the exact answer to what you need was in the same room, but you couldn't figure out a way to go talk to them?

That event could be the event today.

Why is networking so important to entrepreneurs?

1. Starting and running a business requires many facets of talent and experience.

2. Having friends and business acquaintances who can help you find the right answers and resources is powerful.
3. By networking you get connected to other people who can and will help.
4. When you know a lot of people, there are more answers at your fingertips
5. As an entrepreneur, you need resources to bring your idea to market

One thing that entrepreneurs need is contacts in areas that they are weak. We're all good at some things, but we not all good at all things. And for the parts of the business where we are weak, networking can make us strong.

When I started my business, I knew all about marketing... How to launch a brand. How to get a product noticed. How to communicate a benefit and how to attract new customers.

But I struggled with the accounting. If you love the numbers and the order of the bookkeeping, you'll have to forgive me! But I find accounting boring... a necessary evil.

So when I started my business, I knew I needed to find bookkeeping support. And someone to do my taxes. And some people I could talk to about getting some credit for my business. What's the best type of loan for a service business, should I get a credit card with a low rate or with good rewards?

Who could I talk to about that? My network. My colleagues.

When I worked in those big companies with hundreds and thousands of fellow employees, I didn't know how to do everything and didn't need to know.

But when I started my own company I found out I needed resources. Like when you want to back up your computer, who do you call? I never had to worry about that as an employee. The I.T. department just did it.

Or if you need to send a fed ex. Or if you need to file your sales taxes. Or mail a 1000 e-newsletters. Or create a website. You either have to learn to do everything yourself or you find someone who knows how to do it for you.

Learning takes time and doing takes time, but if you network, you'll meet people who know other people who can help you get the work done, effectively, inexpensively and you'll have time to focus on what YOU do best.

Today, I'll share some of the networking tips I've learned since I started my business:

- 1) The **four parts of networking**: market, message, media and measurement
- 2) Tips on how to actually network, **even if you're shy**
- 3) How to **integrate in person networking with social media** online networking for the most effective benefit to your business
- 4) And I'll give you **tips & take-aways**. Steps that you can implement immediately so you can start networking your business today.

FOUR PARTS TO NETWORKING:

1) THE MARKET

Networking is about knowing who is a good prospect. Are you looking for a job, new clients or potential investors?

Friends and colleagues who know your target audience can also help with introductions and referrals.

Referrals, networking and target marketing go hand in hand. So, first, determine your target audience.

Not everyone you meet will be a potential customer. But they may know a potential customer.

So now you might have an idea of who you want to reach, but **what do you tell them?** What do you say??

When you network, you don't want to try to "sell" each person you meet on buying your product or service. But you do want to understand who they are and who they might know. The first part of networking is getting at the WHO.

WHAT: THE **MESSAGE**:

You'll want to create and then practice a 10-20 second opening statement to answer the question of what you do (or what you might be looking for as a student). Keep your phrase positive, free of jargon and outcome-based.

Every once in a while, you're in a situation where you have to go around the room and introduce yourself. Or you got to an event... not unlike this event filled with people who want to know what you do and how you do it.

When you're in your senior year of high school, there are 3 questions:

- 1) Where are you going to college?
- 2) What are you going to study?
- 3) Will you live on campus?

Am I right? Don't people ask you that all the time!?

When you are in college there are the three questions:

- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) What's your major?
- 3) When will you graduate?

But when you're in business, there's only one question:

Over and over you are asked **“What do you do?”**

How do you respond?

Be ready, with your “Networking” description. It also is called the “elevator speech” because you finish it in the time it takes to ride the elevator. This can become one of your strongest networking tools!

You use it to help promote your business – generally to a potential referral, and once in a while, you’ll meet a potential customer!

Requirements:

- 1) 30 seconds or less
- 2) Repeatable
- 3) Memorable
- 4) Identifies your target market
- 5) Expresses a benefit to your market needs

Supposed Kelly, Pat and Terry were asked that question: What do you do? How would they answer it? “I work with numbers?” “I have a patented product?” “I connect with people?”

That really doesn’t tell enough to be effective does it?

I think that there’s a couple of ways to make your Elevator Pitch more effective:

Notice the key features that I identify

1) **State what you do:**

“I have a marketing agency that provides strategic marketing plans and implements marketing programs.

2) **Give an Example** they can relate to: “You know how....”

Many manufacturers with revenues between \$5 to \$50 million in sales don't have a marketing department. They need marketing resources to achieve the sales results they want.

3) **Tell them what you want them to do...** Ask for an ACTION:

I'm looking for one more client company who needs help with their marketing projects like updating their website, developing a strong online brand, or getting a handle on their marketing efforts to improve their sales results.

4) Provide your **name/company last:**

My name is Chris Brown and I own and run a marketing firm in Northeast Ohio called Marketing Resources & Results

I usually mention my name well into the elevator pitch, because it's hard for people to remember your name if you start with that on your commercial. Ever notice how most commercial end with the name of the company, not start with it?

Here's another way with the Help/Benefit/Product approach:

Let me use my company as an example:

1. Who my company helps: professional service firms and contract manufacturing companies
2. What benefit we provide: attract new customers; help to increase sales
3. Services we offer: marketing consulting, website design, public relations, research and sales support materials

This elevator pitch ends with our tag line: the marketing resources you need to achieve the sales results you want.

So it's who you help, what benefit you provide, and what products or services your company offers. Then you can add your name, company name/tag line.

So, **where** do you get a chance to communicate your message?

WHERE: YOUR MEDIA

In person networking:

Work the room Networking is NOT running around the room handing out as many business cards as you can. Plan ahead of special events and target those you want to meet. Speak to event organizers and obtain the attendee list.

Study the list, note centers of influence and arrive early to maximize your networking time.

When the meeting is called to order, do not sit with friends or colleagues. And remember, an empty chair next to you reduces your networking effectiveness by 50%.

Follow up. How can you set yourself apart and be the one people remember? Write follow up notes. Not an email or a text message, but a hand written note. There is nothing wrong with email and texts, but handwritten notes get remembered and are another level, another tier in the relationship building process.

When you contact them, mention an interesting fact or comment about something you learned while actually listening to people during networking. Having a business card is key to obtaining their card. It is difficult to send a note if you do not have their card.

Where to network. Just about anywhere, if you are prepared: A soccer game, at a restaurant, in a parking lot, and of course at networking events. Have your business cards with you at all times. Carry a few in your wallet, clean and unwrinkled. Know your audience through preparation. Depending on your goals, networking at peer groups may not yield the same results as groups where your colleagues are not present.

As an entrepreneur, I've come to realize that knowing how to improve your networking will improve your ability to market and brand your business.

Step-by Step Networking:

Keep your business cards in your right pocket, with your left pocket free to put their business cards. If there are name tags provided put it on the right side of our lapel (people look to the right when they shake hands.)

Don't have a plate of food in one hand and a drink in the other. How can you shake hands? Grasp a business card? Don't be chewing when someone wants to introduce you to someone else. Just because there is food there, doesn't mean you have to eat it.

Depending on the event, on your way there think about some casual small talk subjects for some of the casual conversations: weather, sports or other general, non controversial topics. Have some short good answers ready for the common opening questions: where are you from? How did you get involved in this organization (if the event is hosted by an organization) and the favorite: “what do you do?”

A good networker is always ready for the “what to you do” with their 30 second commercial/elevator speech. I’ve found that just launching into the full 30 seconds is a real conversation killer, so be prepared to have a more back and forth conversation. I will have some open ended conversation starters for you in a minute.

The 30 second commercial works when you are seated in a room of business professionals and the person at the microphone says:

“Let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves, where we are from and what we do.”

When it’s your turn, you stand, take a breath and tell the group who you help, why it is helpful to them, the name of your company and your name. Meanwhile, you’ll be listening to the others to figure out who else you’ll need to meet before the event is over.

Online Networking:

Many of the same concepts apply on line.

Your 30 second commercial is incorporated into your summary statement on LinkedIn.

Or much shorter on your 140 character profile on Twitter.

Some advantages of online networking: you can move at your own pace, on your own time. It is searchable to find who you want

or what you need, even when you don't remember or know their name.

Does social media networking take more time than in-person networking? Let's see. With in person networking you have to get up, get dressed, drive/walk/ride the subway, find the restaurant/hotel/meeting room, get a coffee, mingle, talk, exchange cards, go back, enter data into your contact management system/rolodex/cell phone/outlook email.

With social media, you have to get up, turn on the computer, search, message, converse, reply, follow/friend/like, repeat.

The tools are different, but the concept is the same.

Just like you wouldn't meet someone for the first time and say, "Hi, my name is Chris Brown, Hire me." Or "Hi, my name is Chris Brown, buy my product." When you're on line, you don't try to sell your product or your services without establishing some sort of relationship.

Networking on line or in person is a key for entrepreneurs.

Social media sites. We've been social beings a long time.

Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are just new tools for the same objective.

Balance your profiles personally and professionally and by all means keep them clean. Learn the etiquette of each site and harness the nuances.

Social media can have a much farther reach if you use it effectively.

How can you get your 30 second commercial out there? Put it on **YOU TUBE**: If you haven't recorded your elevator pitch for your company and posted it to YouTube, here's your "throwdown".

Use the same formula to write your script as I did, if you want. Then have someone record it — use a digital camera or even your cell phone. I used Window's Movie Maker to add the titles like my phone number and website and save it in a WMP format so I could upload it to YouTube.

Instant networking!

Tell you what! You record your video in the next week, post it to YouTube and send the URL link to me and I'll post some of the best introductions on my blog with a link to your business site or Twitter profile.

In fact, why wouldn't you have a twitter profile that included a link to your 30 second networking introduction on YouTube. With the revamp interface on Twitter, readers don't even have to leave their Twitter account to watch/ or view 15 different partner sites.

But if you're too shy for YouTube...

What about a Flickr photo with your intro??

So you'll want to marry both online and in person networking get the full effectiveness.

And whether it's on line or in person.... You'll want to make sure your networking is really effective, but there is really only one way to answer that!

You have to measure your results!

How? **MEASURE YOUR RESULTS!**

How do you know that your marketing is effective? How do you measure it? The number of friends on Facebook? Links in LinkedIn? Followers on Twitter? Subscribers to your Blog?

These are all one way, very analytical to measure your progress like the TV measures viewers on a TV show. However... from a reach standpoint, you may want to measure instead the community that you've built:

How many retweets or @ messages sent to you in conversation.

How often is your content shared or liked on Facebook?

How many messages from your contacts on LinkedIn have you received? How many introductions have you asked for/received? What about recommendations? It's a passive way to have your potential customers review testimonials without you even knowing. How many testimonials do you have on LinkedIn?

Tracking is the key to measuring your networking effectiveness.

But what if your challenge isn't the tracking, measuring or analyzing your effectiveness... but you find it difficult to know what to talk about – the small talk of networking.

Remember Kelly Pat and Terry?

Kelly was shy and had trouble talking about the Business. But Terry was an extrovert and had trouble listening to what other people do. Being shy can actually be an asset in business.

If you are shy, how can you overcome it and use it to your advantage?

How about having questions to ask?

Remember how I said that there are 3 questions in high school, 3 questions in college but only one question in business – what do you do? As a shy person, the best way for you to network is to come up with your own 3 questions to ask. Use open-ended questions that get the other person talking. And really listen so you can nod, comment and converse about their answer.

1. How did you get started in your business?
3. What advice would you give to someone who is starting a business?
4. What's the biggest challenge your business is facing right now?
5. What's the best business advice you've ever received from a friend?
6. Please describe your ideal customer (or prospect) so I will know when to refer business to you.

7. What's your best sales experience since you started your business?
8. What are you working on right now at your company?
9. How do you get referrals?
10. How do you want to be referred?
11. What job helped you to decide to go into this business?
12. What technology do you use in your business?
13. How you handle all your e-mail – do you have any tips?
14. What is the biggest benefit of your product/service to your customers?
15. How do you measure success?
16. How has the internet impacted your business?
17. How your industry has changed in the last few years?
18. Do you prefer: phone, text or e-mail and why.
19. What makes a good team? How do you hire?
20. What do you read?
21. Who influences you?
22. What motivates you?
23. When you get your best work done?
24. What's your personal motto?
25. Do you have a mentor? How did you find them?

By really listening, you become an “interesting” person. And this is where the shy people have a better advantage over someone who finds it difficult not to talk and share their experiences. The people who talk too much have to learn to curb their feelings of interrupting, finishing other people’s sentences and not listening to what the other person is saying.

Whether you’re shy or a talker, learning to deal with your natural communication tendencies can make you a better networker.

After the event:

Follow up after an event makes all the difference. Either enter the contacts into your database or use an online contact system like Linked In. Send an email to the person you promised to supply information to. Write a handwritten note to someone you will want to stay in contact with. Perhaps schedule a phone call or meet for coffee to get to know more about the person and their resources.

This is particularly important if you’re an introvert. Because this will make it so much easier to reconnect with the person in 3 months, 6 months when you see them at another event or you need to ask them to help you with something.

To really make your network stronger, you’ll want to reach out and connect two people who could help each other. That is where networking really gets strong. When you become the connector you become the resource.

So, I’ve talked about a lot of tools and techniques up to this point. Asking questions. Using on line tools and developing a 30 second elevator speech.

What other tips should you use to improve your networking techniques?

Here are 10 quick ideas you can use to improve your networking results today:

- 1) No time like the present. Gather your network. NOW! Decide which tool you're the most comfortable with and focus on that on.
- 2) Become a connector. Who do you know that could help someone else you know? Add contacts that you already know. Find out who they know.
- 3) Use online social networks to track your increased reach. It's easier to stay connected when the individuals update their own emails and phone numbers! Jot down where you are today and again in 90 days.
- 4) Remember you have to Give to Get- Help others before you expect to get something in return. What do you have of value to offer to others?
- 5) Connect to the people who like to connect. Connect within your industry and with people who are one step outside the industry. When you connect to someone who's well connected, your sphere of influence grows exponentially. Be strategic about it.
- 6) Respect other people's time. Don't ask everyone to go to lunch, or spend an hour over coffee. But do ask "how can I help you?" And when they ask that in return, have something specific that you ask them to help you with.
- 7) Plan ahead for each event or networking opportunity. Who do I want to meet? What do I want to learn?
- 8) Be prepared to be outgoing. It's okay to travel to a networking event with someone you know, but resist the

temptation to sit with them. Divide and conquer. If one of you is shy, introduce the each other. Know the question you're going to ask.

9) Follow up. Send the Linked in connection message with a reminder where you met. Or a handwritten note to an important contact. And make it a point to check-in from time-to-time

10) Give something away. If you meet in person, have a business card or brochure. If you meet via social networking, have a white paper of helpful information.

So, just to review/summarize:

- 1) Four parts of networking: market, message, media and measurement
- 2) Integrate in person event tools with on line tools to improve your networking impact.
- 3) Use questions to network, especially if you're shy
- 4) Develop a networking action plan so your networking efforts are effective in growing your business today.

Remember Kelly Pat and Terry?

The financial guru, engineering maven and the connector?

Now who do you think was the successful entrepreneur?

Did I mention that Kelly, Pat and Terry, all attended my Networking seminar and connected to each other?

Right: By yourself you only have your own strengths, but by networking you can balance out your weaknesses and make your business very strong.

You can connect with me on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or my blog: Branding and marketing. Just Google “Chris Brown marketing” and you’ll find me.

I hope that my talk today will help you with your networking skills and that I lived up to my company name of providing marketing resources to enhance your sales results.

How to connect with me:

Read my Branding & Marketing blog at

<http://BrandandMarket.com>

Friend me on  **ChrisBrown330**
Become a **FAN** of my company on Facebook:

www.Facebook.com/MarketingResults

Follow me on  **ChrisBrown330**

Link to me on  **ChrisBrown330**

Or **visit** my company website at **<http://www.resources-results.com>**