



THE WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY & HOW OF NETWORKING”

Written by

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There’s that awful term again: Networking. It’s thrown around in every seminar you attend, in every “how-to” book you’ve read and by every writer you know. They all say it’s the way to get in, the way to keep up and keep current. You’re told it’s something you must do or you won’t have a writing career.

I’ve spent over 25 years of my life guiding the careers of writers, directors and producers. As an agent I’ve submitted scripts and novels, negotiated deals, advised clients, worked with projects, edited properties and sold hundreds and hundreds of hours of movies, mini-series and television shows. I’ve also been the one to fan the flames for a client to make sure that they stayed hot. To keep those fires burning it takes both the agent and the client.

You’re probably a solo worker by virtue of being a writer, or you live in Minnesota or Alaska, not Hollywood, California. Perhaps you’ve always been shy or afraid you’ll say the wrong thing. In any event you’re not sure where and who these magical people are with whom you must network. To really network in the most productive way is to find those people who seem impossible to find. You know they must be out there, but how do you get to them? Why will they want to talk to you?

It’s one thing to give your projects to friends or family to critique. You may even join a writers group in person or go on the ubiquitous internet. Perhaps you have used a professional consultant to help with your work. Is this Networking? The simple answer is yes and no.

Those of us who are or have been in the business of finding the best clients, screenplays, novels, etc., really are working hard to reach out to new writers with lots of talent and great ideas. We'll search near and far to find that project we can sell or the right writer we can represent. Don't believe that we are not open to you, because we are.

Finding us isn't difficult. We are everywhere. We are listed with The Writers Guild of America; we are on the Internet and in numerous published information guides like The Hollywood Creative Directories. We speak at seminars and on panels, we go to every film festival in the world. We are right in front of you.

Armed with this information, the next and most important steps are up to you.

WHO: Since we are out there you must go to every seminar, film festival and writers conference that you possibly can find. Everyone at these events is a potential CONTACT. Every speaker has come to help you with your career and in exchange is looking for a great project and/or client. Always trade business cards with each speaker. Try to engage them in a brief conversation. Compliment their speech or their work, and tell them a little bit about yourself.

WHAT: The contacts you make are your doorways into the mainstream of your writing arena. By following up with an email or phone call regarding your best project, you are taking your second most important step to your success. (Naturally your finished project is the first step.)

WHEN: Every chance you get to interface with industry professionals is the right time to act. Whether your project is finished or not, it is in your best interest to make the person-to-person contact and hold on to their information, i.e. business card, until you are ready to submit something wonderful to them.

WHERE: You will need to go anywhere you can to find professionals as well as other writers. Don't ignore new writers groups, internet groups, even magazines and books. Anyone whose work interests you or whose work you admire can be reached via internet research or publisher.

WHY: If you don't connect and network, your work will sit on your shelf and only be read by your favorite friends. If you really want your work published or seen on the screen, you must contact these people.

HOW: After trading those wonderful little business cards, you need to send a short thank you note and reintroduce of yourself. If you are ready, ask if you may send them your work. Be sure to submit your project in a timely manner if they accept your offer. The next step is to ask for a meeting to discuss your project (whether they loved it or not), and to pitch new ideas to them. It is paramount to keep up some sort of sporadic communication with these people, even if it's a Birthday or Christmas card. You have to let them know that you are not going to fade away. One of them will be able to move your work forward, get it to someone who can say "yes", or even just give you great advice.... and we all need someone in our corner.

Perhaps you've looked at this list and asked yourself "What does this have to do with my writing?" The answer is nothing, but it has everything to do with your writing career.

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