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**NETWORK LIKE A PRO—  
FIVE QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION**

Irvine, Ca—We've all been there—at a networking or business event, ready with our business cards in hand. It's no secret that networking is an essential tool for business, but as most networking pros, including Dr. Ivan Misner, founder and chairman of Business Networking International, will tell you, meeting new people is only half the battle.

“Networking is simple, but it's not easy,” explains Misner, co-author of *Networking Like A Pro: Turning Contacts into Connections* (Entrepreneur Press, January 2010) with David Alexander and Brian Hilliard. “Contrary to popular belief, it takes more than an elevator pitch and a business card. Successful networking is about cultivating and maintaining strong relationships, and the courting begins the first time you meet a potential business partner.”

Misner, Alexander, and Hilliard encourage networkers to lead off by asking the right questions, avoiding prospecting or qualifying questions that size up the other person's potential or asking for business right off the bat. Hilliard notes, “If you lead off by asking the right questions—questions that demonstrate a genuine interest in the other person's business—you cultivate an attitude of trust and rapport right from the start.”

The *Networking Like A Pro* authors offer the following five questions:

***“What Do You Like Best about What You Do?”***

Those who have been out networking before already know that “What do you do?” is one of the first questions people ask. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it doesn't leave much room to maneuver after each networker has answered the question.

“What do you like best about what you do” leads to more interesting conversation about the other person's business, his likes and dislikes, his experience, and so forth. It makes the conversation flow and allows the asker to learn about his trade or profession,” sums up Alexander. “What's more, if he's like most, he will eventually decide he's talked enough and will ask you the same question. Be ready with a good response.”

***“You Mentioned that You Were in [Industry]. What Got You Started in that Direction?”***

This question is much like the previous one in that it gives the other person a chance to talk about personal goals and desires and to look favorably on the asker. It also gives insight into how dedicated she is to her profession and how proficient she may be at it.

Hilliard explains, “When you learn what her previous experience has been, you will begin to see ways that you might refer other people to her for specialized products or services.”

***“Where Else Do You Usually Network?”***

Not only does it help break the ice during that sometimes awkward period just after introductions, but it also offers the chance to talk about something common to both parties. This question also provides the opportunity to make an instant connection. How? It provides the other person valuable information he didn't previously have, on a topic that's relevant to him. As we all know, a great step toward creating a solid referral partner is to first make a connection with that person.

***“What Are Some of Your Biggest Challenges?”***

This is a great question that can be used toward the end of the conversation. It allows the opportunity to learn about the other parties' reasons, passion, and motivation for being in her specific business in the first place.

***“How Can I Help You?”***

If the asker decides the person they're talking with is someone they'd like to have in their business network, this is a good question to ask. His answer may tell you something that will enable you to help him, and being helpful is the best way to start building a solid relationship.

“To a networker who is living the principle of Givers Gain, it's a question that comes naturally, because that networker is one who has adopted the mindset of giving value and service to others without any thought of immediate return,” summarizes Misner. “It demonstrates that you have the other person's interests uppermost in your mind, and it's an excellent way to build the credibility and trust you'll want to share with a valuable networking partner.”

Remember, everyone has a story. Make it your job to find out what it is.

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Ivan Misner, Ph.D., is the founder and chairman of BNI, the world's largest business networking organization. He has written eleven books including three *New York Times* bestsellers. He has been featured in the *L.A. Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*, as well as numerous TV and radio shows including *CNN*, *CNBC*. He is the co-author of *Networking like a Pro: Turning Contacts into Connections* with authors David Alexander and Brian Hilliard.

David Alexander is the Chief Networking Officer of Referrals4life, LLC., one of the largest BNI franchises in the world. He is also an author and keynote speaker.

Brian Hilliard specializes in helping busy entrepreneurs market their business in less than 90 days. As a popular speaker and owner of Agito Consulting, Hilliard is best known for delivering dynamic, thought-provoking sessions that keep people coming back.

*Networking like a Pro: Turning Contacts into Connections* will be available at all major bookstores and online book sellers on January 1, 2010.

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**NOTE TO EDITORS:** Authors are available for interview.

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