

# Aristotle understood networking



By [Ann Druce](#)

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Networking has become a buzz word, but it's hardly a new way to market your business. Of course, the fact that it has been around for generations underscores that it does have merit. The only real change is the way in which networking has been formalised.

## Social animal

Man is, by nature, a social animal. Okay, that's not an entirely accurate translation from the Greek, but it is the usually accepted one. The point is that networking is nothing new; even as long ago as a couple of centuries BC, Aristotle recognised that people need relationships.

For generations, old boys' networks, sports clubs, church groups, charities and, of course, political groups have provided opportunities for business people to develop relationships that work for business.

These days, a wide variety of professions and special interest groups, including the Institute of Civil Engineers, the Law Society, the Chamber of Commerce and the Businesswomen's Association aim to promote their profession or opportunities for members and offer their members a forum to meet, develop relationships and, yes, even look for business opportunities. Some groups host meetings with the explicit objective of networking.

## Far more potent

But the reality is that simply going to a networking function and swapping business cards isn't going to be as effective as using networking opportunities to build relationships. Developing trust and respect among other members of a group is a far more potent approach to networking. And one of the most effective ways to build trust and respect is to contribute your time and talents.

Many business associations operate largely on a volunteer basis. Organising committees work hard to find interesting speakers, plan social events and commit to social investment projects, and helping hands are welcomed with gratitude.

Joining committees and sub-committees gives members the opportunity to truly get to know their colleagues. You soon learn who is reliable, energetic and committed; who you'd be happy to recommend for their professionalism and integrity.

## Occasional passengers

Sadly, you sometimes discover occasional passengers too: those who either don't deliver or simply decline to contribute, leaving you wondering exactly why they are on the committee.

But those who do make a contribution not only get the satisfaction of a job well done, they also gain a reputation among an influential group of business people, and enhance their business profile, surely a powerful consequence of networking.

## ABOUT ANN DRUCE

I help clients define and execute digital marketing strategies, to make a real contribution to achieving their business goals.

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