

## **Best Practices 9-21-17 - by Gerri Harris**

The WBEC - West 12th Annual Strategic Procurement Opportunity Conference is a great opportunity to make connections with supplier diversity professionals and other WBE's. Here are a few tips for converting the connections you make into actionable relationships after the conference.

- 1. TAKE NOTES ON THE BUSINESS CARDS YOU RECEIVE:** We suggest you write a word or two or note on the card to remind you of what was exchanged.
- 2. PRIORITIZE AND DEFINE WHO TO FOLLOW UP WITH AND WHY** - We all come back with a lot of business cards prioritizing the ones that make the most sense to follow up on. Identify why, and the specific about what you will follow up with them about. I usually do this on the back of the cards right after the event.
- 3. DRAFT A CUSTOMIZED FOLLOW UP LETTER TO EACH GROUP** - Divide your connections into groups and customize a follow up letter to them. This letter should make sense and should connect the dots regarding why you should stay connected.
- 4. INVITE THEM TO CONNECT WITH YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA** - This can help you get into people's communities, stream conversations and get you started in building commonality. Use LinkedIn as a starting point, and if appropriate, add Twitter and then Facebook.
- 5. CREATE A 30 DAY FOLLOW UP PLAN** - Make a 30 day plan for each person or group of contacts that you would like to develop a relationship with. Be consistent and interact as regularly as possible utilizing different tools. I love adding Google alerts for the companies I target. It allows me to connect with them on current topics and gives me a reason to reach out.
- 6. HAVE CONVERSATIONS, NOT SALES PITCHES** - Move your focus away from the sales pitch and towards relationship building. Once the relationship is in place, the sale will come naturally.
- 7. ADD VALUE** - Be prepared to give something of value - a solution, a fresh perspective, a free pen
- 8. BE PAITENT** - Business relationships take time to pay off. It may take years of talking and planning with someone before you actually end up working together or see any results.
- 9. MAKE THEIR LIVES EASIER** - If you can help them out, they will love doing business with you. Try to make all of your interactions fit seamlessly into their schedule.
- 10. LISTEN** - Pay attention to what your prospect is saying, ask questions. Your prospect will always let you know what they want. You just have to listen.
- 11. SEEK FEEDBACK** - Find out if your product fits what they are looking for. See if there are any small adjustments that you can make to better serve their needs. They will be more satisfied with the transaction and appreciate your efforts.

Good Luck on your Endeavors

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