

Bulletproof Prospecting - Trash the 3 Foot Rule

If you've been around the networking industry for any time, you've probably heard about the 3 Foot Rule.

Success is achieved in network marketing by talking to people about your business and ultimately finding the partners who see it, get it, build it. It follows then, that exposure to the business model and then your company is your work. The more people you talk to, the more likely you are to find the people who are interested in what you've got.

Approximately 70 thousand people worldwide get started in a networking business every single day, so if you were to talk to even a few people every day, chances are good, you'd find some business partners.

The 3 Foot Rule is a technique often taught to enthusiastic beginners. Someone tells you: talk to anyone that gets within 3 feet of you – wherever and whenever. Suddenly everyone is a walking target – your walking target. It ain't pretty. In fact, it can be downright ugly.

Maybe it's happened to you – you're waiting in line at the post office or at the grocery store and someone starts up a quick conversation and asks what you do and the next thing you know, they're telling you ought to check out this great new company that's going to change your life, make you healthy, help you lose weight, grow hair if you're bald and make you rich – maybe even by next week.

It makes people want to run screaming from the building. Really. It does. Do you suppose in any other profession people find business partners by stalking them in the supermarket? OK – maybe I'm exaggerating the approach a little, but really, it's one of the things that makes people love to hate network marketing. People are taught to come on like a freight train and it's a turn-off.

No one likes an in-your-face-marketer, and I don't think most of us want to be one, either. It's unattractive at best. There are great ways to talk to people when you're out - and, in my opinion, this isn't the way to do it.

So, what is the way to talk to people you don't know? Be SUBTLE. Be PROFESSIONAL. Do it like this: Say you're at a party or in line at the post office – because honestly, sometimes I'm in line at the PO for longer than I'm at a party, at least it seems that way. You get chatting with someone. It's a great skill to develop in this business –whether you like small talk or not – it will really serve you well over time to get good at it.

At a party, it's a little more normal to make small talk by asking someone what they do. At the Post Office, you might start with the weather or someone more universal and less directly about them.

Let's start with the party example – any gathering or business meeting would be the same, it's a 'mingling situation' technique. Ask someone about themselves. Become a Master Question Asker. Most people will be very forthcoming, because they're (generally speaking) talking about their favorite subject: themselves!

What do you do? Do you like it? What company are you with? Have you been there a long time? What's it like? Learn a bit about them. In your mind you can be evaluating whether they might be a good business partner candidate. Are they upbeat? Friendly? Easy to talk to? Funny?

Maybe they reveal some things that tell you extra income might be helpful. Sometimes people will tell you they love what they do, but they work too much. Or don't get enough vacation time. Or no retirement plan. Or, the job is great, the money is good, but they hate it! All of these become cues.

BUT YOU NEVER, I SAID NEVER – is that CLEAR? NEVER prospect them then and there. If they ask you what you do, you need to have a 2 minute answer prepared so you don't look like a deer in the headlights and not know what to say, or worse, start downloading everything about your business. I promise you that download will lose you more business than it will EVER get you. Guaranteed. Really. Avoid it like the plague.

Then after a reasonable time you say – and you have to learn how to do this gracefully – “you know, I've really enjoyed talking to you, you got my wheels turning, I've got to run, but I'd actually like to run something by you if I could call you – do you have a card?”

NOTE: always carry your own card – a good generic one with your contact info, no business/company name is good (sort of like an old fashioned calling card). If you give them a card with the name of your business/company that you represent, you're giving away what you want and it doesn't work as well.

If they don't have a card (and at parties and other social gatherings, people often don't), you can say: Here, just write your info on the back of mine, hand them one of yours to write on, have a pen on you, get their info! Let me give you a call next week...if they press you and say, what do you want to talk about...you have to say something like...it's a business question and I don't want to talk business here, just not the right place, but I've really enjoyed talking to you – enjoy the party or see you later or whatever phrase feels comfortable to you.

Then, next week give them a call and say something along these lines: Hey Barbara, this is Sue Miller, we talked at the Siegel's BBQ last Saturday and I mentioned wanting to give you a call. Is this a good time – do you have a quick minute right now? If not, ask her when she does, make a time, and call back.

If the timing works – say: you know, you mentioned that you love your work, but that you were concerned your husband might get downsized. I was wondering if you two keep your financial options open and if you might be interested in looking at a very interesting way to generate a secondary income?

If you get a yes, you're on your way, with your dignity intact and having made a good impression.