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## SIX TIPS FOR THE NETWORKING IMPAIRED (Inside Columbia, Feb. 2006) - 2/1/2006 December 12, 2005

About 400 Words

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### SIX TIPS FOR THE NETWORKING IMPAIRED

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Business schools don't teach the art of networking, so you have to seek out a guru.

Luckily, you don't have to search for a monastery in Tibet. There's an expert in California: Dr. Ivan Misner, founder of BNI (Business Network International) and author of the New York Times bestseller *Masters of Networking*.

Networking is about helping people, Misner says. The best networkers are givers, as reflected in BNI's slogan: "Givers Gain." If you give to others, they will give to you. Here's a few quick networking tips from the master:

- **Be a farmer, not a hunter.** Networking is not about exchanging business cards, but forming relationships. The best way to close more sales is to cultivate long-term relationships, not to search the woods expecting to bag a buck.
- **Honor the event.** Understand the kind of event you are attending and its unwritten rules; use good judgment to make sure your networking tactics fit the occasion. With discretion, you can even network at church.
- **Avoid "scorched-earth" networking.** People who are rude, pushy and overbearing – the hard-sellers – are scorched-earth networkers. Constantly talking, never listening, expecting to get without ever giving, they pillage and burn as they work the room, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.
- **Look for open groups at a mixer.** Read the body language of groups as you move about the room, and find one with an opening. If you see two people facing each other one-on-one in heated conversation, find another group. If a group of three people are standing close together like the points of a triangle, move on. If a larger group looks like a closed circle, keep moving.
- **Act like a host, not a guest.** Be confident, as if you belong. If you get nervous in a big room with lots of people you don't know, volunteer for the role of host in the organization. Depending on the organization, this job might be called greeter, visitor host or ambassador.

- **Simplify your information to the Lowest Common Denominator.** Don't tell people everything you do. Boil it down to the most specific unit, usually the most important thing you do. Through simplicity, teach others how to identify the best people to refer to you. Instead of trying to close a sale, educate an extended sales force.

*To learn more about Misner's networking system, there are four BNI chapters in Columbia that teach it. Contact Jim Muench, president of BNI's Columbia Referral Network chapter, at [Jmuench@FarWestPR.com](mailto:Jmuench@FarWestPR.com) or 499-4897.*

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