



Jan Vermeiren

The difference between hard selling and networking

For many people the word “networking” has a negative connotation. This is in part due to the fact that many salesmen abuse networking to push their products or services. So let’s take a deeper look into the difference between (hard) selling and networking to solve some of the misunderstandings about networking.

The main difference between selling and networking is that in a sales process the goal of the interaction between two people is the sale of a product or service. When networking, this sale could be the consequence of a contact that is built with respect and care. So it is clear that the sale is not the goal of networking, but a nice and in many cases a logical consequence.

The comparison in the table (below) goes into the details of the difference between selling and networking. The table shows several elements of “negative networking” by hard sellers on the one hand and “real networking” on the other hand.

To make it even more clear, I have a small example for you.

Situation: a salesman of fire extinguishers meets the manager of a local affiliate of a bank at a reception of the Chamber of Commerce.

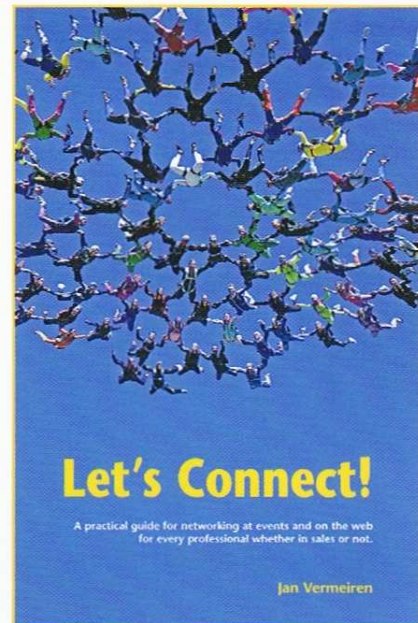
Hard Selling

The salesman does his sales magic to convince the manager to buy fire extinguishers for his office. He is a good salesman and he manages to sell 5 fire extinguishers. The evening of the salesman is a success.

Networking

The salesman is interested in the manager as a person. Amongst other things he learns that the manager is a passionate sailor and that he is looking for a new boat. The salesman remembers that a friend of his has a boat for sale. He not only passes this on to the manager, but also provides them with each other's contact details the following day. A week later the boat has a new owner.

Four months later the salesman receives a phone call from the manager. The manager asks him to deliver new fire extinguishers for the office and for the facilities of the sailing club where



the manager recently became chairman. Moreover the manager proposes to write a letter to all the members of the sailing club with a recommendation for the fire extinguishers of the salesman. The year of the salesman is a success. ■

This is an excerpt from the book “Let’s Connect!” by Networking Coach Jan Vermeiren (www.letsconnect.be)

Hard sellers who network...	Real networkers...
<i>Are focused on the short term</i>	<i>Are focused on the long term</i>
Try to detect a need that can be satisfied by their product or service	Share any information that can be interesting for the other party
Only give when they have an immediate profit	Give without expecting something back (and in the long run this usually pays off better too)
Listen in order to get the deal	Listen to help
Ask questions in order to be able to position their product or service better	Ask questions to be able to be better of assistance
Find people interesting only if they are a potential customer	Find everybody interesting as a contact. You can never be certain of who they know and what they know
Want to collect and distribute as many business cards as possible	Ask and give business cards to people with whom they really established contact.
Talk often only about their product or service without listening to others	See to it that others always talk more than they do, listen carefully to them and encourage them to tell more
Try to bring the attention to their product or service	Recommend products or services of people in their network (and only if they are relevant for the people they talk to)
The goal is the sale. People are a means, a resource (sometimes even a necessary evil) to reach that goal	The goal is to establish and maintain contacts One of the possible consequences is a sale

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