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High-Octane Networking Secrets for Success

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Why networking is hot
- Getting in the door
- Where to network in Tokyo
- Online networking tools
- Expert networking tips
- Five tips for working with executive recruiters

Blue chip businesses, soaring careers and successful individuals very often have one key factor in common – effective networking. But while it's no secret that the implementation of an effective networking strategy has the potential to realize substantial personal and professional benefits, it pays to be aware that if your strategy has the wrong motives, you may find yourself extinguishing good contacts faster than you are finding them, and wondering why no one returns your calls.

For this *Executive Answers* newsletter, business reporter **Jonathon Walsh** talked to some of Tokyo's most active networkers to discover how foreigners can build up and utilize an effective network in Japan, and suggests a range of industry-tested tips showing how networking can help you find your dream job.

Why networking is hot

Let's learn some of the outcomes effective networking can lead to. **Gary Bremermann**, a Tokyo-based executive search consultant at executive search and recruiting firm **Robert Leonard Consulting** (www.robertleonard.jp) and highly active networker, says, "As a recruiter, networking events often lead to successful placements happening, which is a win-win for both parties." **Andrew Shuttleworth**, incessant networker and founder of **Customers, Vendors, People** (www.cvp.jp) who aim to connect businesses with quality vendors of business services, says, "A great network can be a great source of information. My last two jobs came directly as a result of long term networking."

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Getting in the door

Most, if not all networking takes place for a purpose and for many, the goal is to expand a business, gain more contacts, or further a career. What are the most effective ways for business professionals to network with these aims in mind?

Dave Mori, co-Founder and President of **English OK KK** (www.englishok.jp) and the **Entrepreneur Association of Tokyo NPO** (www.ea-tokyo.com), says “If a foreign business professional would like to advance their business, I would recommend that they *try to attend a mix of at least 3-4 ‘networking style’ events*, meaning events with half or more of the scheduled time being allocated to networking. The mix will be totally dependent on who the professional wants to meet. A good mix for someone who is looking for clients and small-medium sized business service providers would be any of the chamber of commerce events, wine events such as those provided by **Orca International** (www.orca-international.com/jp), and of course the **Pink Cow Conspiracy** (www.thepinkcow.com) and **EA-Tokyo** are great places to meet people. I would also recommend asking your friends (Japanese and foreign) for events they would recommend so that you open up your chances of finding events with completely different people.”



Bremermann presents a number of options:

- 1) Attend events relevant to your target industry.
- 2) Have the intention of getting to know people first, not merely focusing on your own narrow self-interests.
- 3) Network in a spirit of giving, not just getting, and
- 4) Have a short and simple message that you can impart verbally about what you or your business does.

For professionals wanting to find a new position, Mori says that since most businesses in Tokyo are actively looking for talented people, all of the previously-mentioned locations are suitable for looking for a job. “But I would also recommend events like Andrew’s Career Fair or Gary’s Happy Hour parties. Expos and conventions at **Makuhari Messe International Convention Complex** (www.m-messe.co.jp) or **Tokyo Big Site** (www.bigsight.jp/English) are also a great place to meet prospective employers.”



Shuttleworth suggests meeting as many new people as possible each week. “Don’t just exchange meishi, but have a good conversation. The same goes for jobs.”

Follow up is fundamental

However, while meeting and greeting is just the start of the fine art of networking, the follow up is fundamental. **Caroline Pover**, CEO of foreign women’s network **Being A Broad** (www.being-a-broad.com), admits she is always surprised how few people do this. “It doesn’t take much to drop someone an e-mail the next day just saying that it was nice to meet them – it doesn’t matter whether you think you can work together or not, but following up keeps the contact open.”



Where to Network in Tokyo

The growing number of professional functions and networking parties taking place around Japan are great venues for rubbing shoulders, meeting new people, and of course, doing business.

Here is a select listing of some of the places to be seen at around Tokyo:

American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) www.accj.or.jp

Supports the international business community.

British Commerce in Japan (BCCJ) www.bccjapan.com

Supporting British-Japan ties for more than 55 years.

Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ) www.cccj.or.jp

Made up of companies and individuals with an interest in the Canada-Japan relationship.

Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (ANZCCJ) www.anzccj.jp

Promotes business and strengthens cultural ties between Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

International Computer Association (ICA) www.icajapan.jp

One of Japan’s largest, most influential organizations covering Information Technology and Business.

Entrepreneur Association of Tokyo www.ea-tokyo.com

Promotes and supports entrepreneurship in Japan.

Forum for Corporate Communications (FCC) www.fcc-tokyo.com

A Tokyo-based organization of professionals interested in international communications.

Foreign Executive Women (FEW) www.few-japan.com

Professional organization helping foreign women network with others in Japan.

Pink Cow Conspiracy (PCC) www.thepinkcow.com

Informal meetings geared toward small and creative business people.

International Women in Communications (IWIC) www2.gol.com/users/iwic

Non-profit organization promoting professionalism, the free flow of information and the advancement of women in communications.

Online Networking Tools

For people who just don't have enough hours in the day to attend networking meetings, there is always the growing number of network-focused blogs, forums and business exchange websites that are bringing people together online.

Here is a selection of some of the larger online networks:

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com

A website devoted specifically to helping people make business contacts. Connecting up to 8 million professionals, LinkedIn allows members to find people, jobs and services.

Ecademy www.ecademy.com <http://japan.ecademy.com>

A business exchange network that connects people to knowledge, contacts, support and businesses.

openBC www.openbc.com

An online networking platform that brings more than 1.5 million business people together with innovative networking and communication technologies available in 16 languages.

Openness & honesty name of game

One of the fastest ways to lose in the networking game is to use and abuse your carefully cultivated relationships.

How should you network without falling into the common trap of coming across as if you are using the other person for personal gain? Shuttleworth emphasizes openness. **"Just be genuinely genuine.** If you are networking with a person because you want something from them, just be open and say this up front."

Bremermann suggests always coming to a relationship with a sincere giving mentality. "Think: What can I do for this person? How can I help this person? What can I give to this person? Most people are uncannily sensitive to others' intentions and if you sincerely intend to be of help to others, others will help you."



Mori suggests not harboring this mindset to begin with. "Networking is really about getting to know people and making friends. It is also a very long process which is why going to 3-4 events per month is good because you begin to see some of the same people and you can actually begin to form relationships with them."

Expert Networking Tips

While there's no getting around the fact that networking takes time and effort to establish the relationships that count, there are ways to get a step ahead of the rest.

Here's some hot tips from the pros:

- **Shuttleworth's top tip** is to be genuinely interested in the other person more than yourself.
- **Bremermann suggests getting out and meeting people.** "Say hello, be friendly, and show a true interest in what other people are saying. Be interested, not just interesting."
- **Pover says networkers should try to meet five people at each networking event they go to.** "Try to meet two you can help, two who can help each other, and one you'll like to get to know as a friend. Achieving your own goals will come naturally!"
- **Mori's best advice is to look at networking as something you want to do rather than have to do** to build your business or career. "If you really want to do it and just have fun, the people you meet with feel it and your ability to make friends and build relationships will dramatically increase."

Other useful tips include:

- Utilize your existing contacts.
- Target specific trade groups related to your industry.
- Take care not to abuse relationships.
- Maintain contact with your network, even when you are not looking for anything in particular.

Continual cultivation of your network could be one of the most cost-effective strategies you ever implement.

To find community and networking events happening around Japan, see: www.japanevents.net

JAPAN EVENTS provided by **Customers, Vendors, People** (www.cvp.jp) – helping businesses to connect with quality vendors for any type of B2B service. If you are looking for a quality partner to help your business, contact CVP at anzccj-connect@cvp.jp

Five Tips for Working with Executive Recruiters

Here's some tips for how networking can land you the perfect job:

1. **Use your existing connections.** Spread the word about your job hunting ambitions among friends, family and former colleagues.
2. **Build relationships with people before asking them to help you.**
3. **Even if you are not planning a job change, get to know a top recruiter or two in your field.** Try to find out through friends and colleagues who they know of in recruiting and make an effort to get to know that person.
4. **A personal introduction is often a good way to connect with a top recruiter.** Most recruiters will pay special attention to people who have been personally introduced from someone they know.
5. **When you are working with a recruiter, and something is urgent or important, always follow up an e-mail with a telephone call.**

Looking for more quality business advice and success stories?

To read more business newsletters like this *and* to find how other foreigners are making it big in Japan, see:

www.ea-tokyo.com/resources/articles.php

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