Successful Networking Calls

Once you know who in your network you want to contact, you must decide what you want to SAY and how to CONNECT with them. Here are some best practices and timely tips for doing just that:

1. **Planning a successful networking call.** It's important to establish your ground rules and expectations for what the networking call is designed to accomplish. Remember that:

   - Your are calling to obtain information.
   - You are calling to make yourself visible in the marketplace.
   - You don't want to put someone on the spot.
   - You don't want to "sell" yourself.

2. **Scripting a successful networking call.** Basically, the critical elements of a networking call/contact are:

   - Greeting
   - Referral Statement
   - Purpose of Call
   - Background Summary (Your elevator speech)
   - Closing

   In a perfect world, after you have given a contact the purpose of your call and filled them in on your background, they will start a discussion with you about how they can help. Not everyone will give you names, etc. immediately---but some may. You are now beginning to build your network!

   Once you have your script in place, think about how to reach your contacts. (Your script should not be over-rehearsed but spoken in a conversational, story-telling style.)

3. Choosing Outreach Tools and Tactics. Your options for outreach follow---along with tips for using each:

- **Telephone:** If you have a direct number, call it. Even if you don't reach the party, you can leave a message with the critical elements and a time when you will call back.

- **Email:** Here again, you are reaching the person directly. Keep to your critical elements script. Be short and sweet. Using email doesn't give you the option of a follow-up phone call and you have to be careful not to "bug" your contact. So, in the case of email, it's a sit and wait for a reply situation.

- **On-line:** Group members and other contacts are usually open to contacts. Again, you can't "bug" anyone so just sit and wait for an answer. Third party contacts are harder. You are hoping that your initial contact will forward your information on and that you will get a reply. Some people are not comfortable with this online forwarding service. My advice is to check with your contact first before starting the forwarding process. Maybe your contact will even volunteer to help you directly!

- **Snail mail:** Does it really exist? Yes and it can be quite effective with a primary contact. Dropping them a note to ask for assistance, a meeting or just informing them you are looking makes it very personal. Give it a try!