



Business and
Professional
Women/IL

NETWORKING MANUAL

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The purpose of this manual is to serve as a guide to help the membership of your Local Organization get the most from their Networking efforts as an on-going activity.

NETWORKING!

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N E T W O R K I N G -WHAT IS IT???

According to "Webster" - *"Networking is the exchange of information or services."*

When Networking is used as a professional and personal tool, it can: educate, expand one's social activities and provide a platform for swapping, sharing & exchanging information and ideas while spreading the word about the benefits of BPW.

THE BPW LINK-YOUR HEAD START!

The more that Networking is used, the more important and significant it becomes. B.P.W. is committed to helping you expand your formal and informal contacts by linking you with others on a national and international scale.

This link enables you to offer your members so much more than many other organizations. And, let's face it, there are a lot of them out there vying for your members attention.

International

IFBPW was founded in 1930 with 6 members and today is the largest organization of its kind in the world!

Being a part of International BPW means that we are over strong with a blending of members from every walk of life with over 60 languages being spoken. The strength, power and support we have when we join together for common causes are unbeatable! The IFBPW Organization is comprised of many dedicated people. Their dedication extends worldwide as members of various cultures and backgrounds come together to discuss, resolve and pave-the-way for a better tomorrow. Keeping you informed of International and National concerns and how your Local Organization and members fit into the scheme of things is done through the "BPW Link" - from International - to National - to State - to District - to Local Organization - and then directly to You!

Nationally

Founded in 1919.

The yearly National convention draws thousands. The interesting contacts that you meet from all over the country and the friendships born makes Networking here most stimulating. These conventions provide members an educational and informative platform and participation can indeed be rewarding.

BPW organizations are in all states with local organizations in hundreds of towns and cities across the country. This affiliation gives members, while traveling the U.S.A., abroad, or at home, contacts for assistance, referrals and connections.

On The State Level

The Illinois Federation was organized in 1921.

State sponsored workshops, conferences and conventions help develop members leadership skills and personal development.

The **Illinois Guide** booklet, published by the state federation, is an excellent reference listing all State Officers, Committee People and District Officers, etc. The Federation Calendar, the IFBPW Objectives and Goals, the Legislative Platform and the Federation's By-Laws make this a convenient and informative source. Members may take advantage of this valuable resource at the June Leadership Conferences.

Your District

Participation at District meetings and functions gives members the opportunity to practice and expand their Networking efforts. It is also a time to become more knowledgeable about BPW, your surrounding communities and other organizations' activities through the interaction that takes place.

Your Local Organization

Note: Networking is a criteria as part of the "L.O. of the Year Award".

Belonging to BPW provides members a springboard to literally thousands of contacts of varied interests and backgrounds. Your local Networking efforts should address the needs and concerns of your members. If responsive, yet flexible to changing conditions, your Networking will be successful! Your BPW's District, State, National and International affiliations gives you a "Head Start" as a resource for information and ideas.

RESPONSIBILITIES: THE LOCAL NETWORKING CHAIRMAN

Welcome to Networking!

“Networking” doesn’t just happen all by itself - it is a tool and in the hands of those who can recognize its effectiveness and who are willing to give as well as take, they will help themselves by establishing those all so important connections needed to Network effectively. As Networking Chairman, you will have an opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people and expand your own horizons.

It is important in the "Network Game" to honor your commitments by keeping your promises to others. Do not be afraid to say “No” if you are unable to take on the additional responsibility of a commitment at the time.

A by-product of “Effective Networking” is membership retention and growth. This is accomplished when members recognize that belonging and participating in BPW functions contributes to their own personal and professional development. The Membership and Public Relations Chairmen would be valuable as part of your Networking Committee.

At your first committee meeting:

Establish short-term and long term “Goals”.

Design a questionnaire to survey membership needs, concerns and interests.

Set-up a schedule of dates & times for future committee meetings.

Assign duties for committee members.

Other Duties:

It is essential for the Networking Chairman or Committee person to attend the training workshop held in June at the State Leadership Conference. These conferences have been available since 1947 providing members the opportunity to share ideas with their peers.

The Networking Committee will act as a resource and referral base for members and the community. In addition, they will work with the Local Organization’s President and other committee chairmen to increase membership, retain members, and address the concerns of the membership. Keep a notebook to record your meetings, discussions and suggestions. This information will be helpful at the end of the year and when passed on to the next chairman.

IDENTIFYING THE “NETWORK” NEED

Look at your Local Organizations members needs and to what is being addressed presently. When membership is diverse, members bring new experiences, knowledge and skills to your Local Organization. This also gives the members more opportunity for effective Networking exchanges. To identify your members’ needs, it is suggested that you take a survey in the form of a questionnaire - not only of active members but include those who have not retained their membership.

While all this seems to address the needs of the working members, let’s not forget the retired members and those in need of support, a sounding board or just to share a common interest.

PLANNING / GOAL SETTING

Once the members' needs have been determined, the Networking Chairman and committee should meet to develop a plan to attract those people whom it is felt would foster situations within the organization that will address the needs of their membership.

For example:

Your local organization expressed the desire to increase their business contacts within the community. The committee met to discuss this need and developed the following recommendations to meet this goal:

- To hold** an after hours Wine & Cheese,
and invite the chamber of commerce members.
- To sponsor** a Women Business Owners Conference.
- To Participate** in a Business Career Day at a local college
- To choose** a current Business Topic or that of community concern, as a program.
- To obtain** a “Recognized Speaker” inviting the community business people and, to get good press coverage and send out invitations.

Members to select that recommendation which would be the most beneficial, then the committee should have a follow-up meeting to discuss how to implement this “Goal” and ways in which they can determine its community effectiveness.

GETTING ORGANIZED

The driving force behind most successful people is usually their contacts. The larger ones contact base, the easier and less time-consuming it is to reach the person, company, product or information you need. When time is of the essence and you need something fast- your contacts can be worth their weight in gold! (To a true Networker - their contact directory is a valued possession that is used daily.

Card file

As you collect contacts, the card file is the least expensive method of organizing and gives you quick access to finding what you need. You may find that color-coding or cross-referencing helpful. Give your files a checkup at least once a year to update and purge those that are no longer current. For those members who prefer to carry this information with them, a directory might be the answer. Your card file / directory can be set up in a variety of ways.

Choose the way that is best for you:

- Alphabetically
- Interest
- Function (Title)
- Geographically
- Industry
- Organization

Computer

Computers are an ideal efficient method to store & cross-reference your list of contacts. Changes and updates are easy and fast. There are numerous software programs to help you set-up and even track your contacts; by date, name, geographically or by product, services or other information categories that you choose. A computer can also dial your contact for you and talk direct, computer-to-computer, or send and retrieve information worldwide.

THE “TOOLS AND WAYS” FOR EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

The following is a guide for what can be done and how to implement Networking within your local organization. The interest & exposure from your Networking efforts can have a very positive effect on your membership.

Mentoring

Sharing of ones skills and knowledge in this manner can be very rewarding for both parties. Start - by pairing off an established member with a new member. This can be an excellent way for the new member to learn about BPW and keeps the established member involved.

Include information about your members' talents, those who wish to mentor and those who wish to learn, in your Resource Bank. These requests can be matched and brought together. Keep in touch to see how things are going.

Establishing a Resource Bank

The more Networking that takes place, the more BPW and its members are recognized as a source for referrals, and as a resource to get to the people who can "make it happen".

From time-to-time, your local organization may be looked to, by the community, as a resource for such positions as: Directors of companies, Local commissions, or as a member of a School board.

Keeping your Resource Bank current with up-to-date information is essential for its success. Collect information on your member's products, services, talents, etc. This can be obtained in a variety of ways - by telephone, survey, or at monthly meetings. This information can then be categorized. Then, when a member has a need - your resource bank can provide the answer.

Establishing a Job Bank

Do you have members that are considering a career change, or re-entering the workforce? If so, your local organization may be an important source for referrals.

Your local members might be in a position to help your Job Bank by keeping you informed of opportunities within their companies. They would possess first-hand knowledge about openings and have pertinent information on company policies.

Keep your membership apprised of these career opportunities - perhaps by publishing a "Job Bank" column in the organization's newsletter.

Roundtables

Breaking your members and guests into smaller groups to share ideas, exchange information and discuss a variety of interests, concerns and issues, or to resolve a problem can be rewarding and interesting.

Roundtables are an effective form of Networking Communications and can be a fast way to get immediate "feedback" from your members and guests. Someone on the Networking committee should serve as Roundtable Leader to guide the conversation and to keep the participants "on track". A function of the Leader would insure that all participants have an opportunity to be heard. The Leader would give a verbal summary of the discussion, then follow with a report to the organization's newsletter.

Targeted Networking

As your Network grows, you might find that breaking-up into groups for a specific purpose has its advantages - this is called "Targeted Networking". To get the most from this type of Networking, it is important to have representation from broad and varied backgrounds. These groups will then have the ability to approach the focused issues from all angles.

Computers - Your Link to the World!

Today, in the "Information Age", it becomes even more important for us to understand the ways in which information is shared and how to get it. There is a whole big world out there that we can tap into - at anytime, right from the privacy of our own desk with a computer. Fascinating - isn't it? This electronic media is particularly well adapted to bringing people together who might not otherwise have met, or for sending and receiving information. And, with computers, we can swap goods, collect information, correspond, shop, advertise and even do our banking, etc., etc.

Fax It!

Another way of sharing information and corresponding is through "Faxing". With a fax machine, one can send and receive any printed communication across the world in a flash, and for the cost of a telephone call.

Directory

Your member directory is a useful source for Networking. It is important that the organization's directory be in the hands of your members early in the year.

Newsletter

Member advertising is a good way to promote members and to offset the cost of your local organization's newsletter. The Networking Chairman should submit articles of information to keep the "door of communication" open.

The Media

Publicity is an excellent form of "Networking". The Media (newspaper, radio, cable TV, etc) is another link to reaching others. So, get The "Word Out" and promote your members and your local organization through all the available media in your area and to those sources which affect your members.

Cable is especially a good vehicle to reach thousands within your community and surrounding areas which otherwise might not have been reached. Cable Companies usually offer free workshops for those interested in working on a community channel or doing their own cable show. Going "cable" will give your members and BPW great exposure and community awareness! Make a list of all those frequently used "media sources" and include their deadlines and format instructions for your ease of communication.

Showcasing

Highlighting your member's products, services or talents gives them the opportunity to promote themselves to other members and guests.

Literature Information Table

This offers members the opportunity to exhibit and exchange information, and can easily be made available at all BPW meetings and functions.

Poster Display

A good poster board is an immediate "attention getter". It should include a place for your members to advertise their businesses and/or post their interests. This can be done in a variety of ways and at relatively low cost using the talents of your members. **Let your imagination go!**

10 Rules for Successful Networking

- 1. Networking opportunities are everywhere.**
- 2. Exchange information.**
- 3. To start - you need a plan!**
- 4. What do you want? - Be definite!**
- 5. Organize your contacts**
- 6. Respect your contacts' time.**
- 7. Keep your promises.**
- 8. Identify your Networking sources.**
- 9. Nurture your Network.**
- 10. Get Going!**

Plan your "Network Garden"
and cultivate it with care,
Soon, You'll enjoy
the fruits of your labor
from everywhere!