

Ease and Do[©]

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It's OK to Say No.

Just don't leave me in suspense.

Remember me? We met at that networking event three weeks ago. We had a great conversation, exchanged cards and agreed heartily that we need to follow-up. I even sent you the follow-up information you requested. Three voice messages and three e-mails later I'm beginning to think I had you all wrong. What gives? Am I invisible?

Most of my colleagues' say it's happened to them as well; how about you? I know I shouldn't take it personally but I have to ask: Is it something I said or didn't say? Something I did or didn't do? I'm always eager to learn how to improve upon what I'm doing so when I meet an enthusiastic person and they suddenly turn silent I become very curious.

Have you ever done this to someone else? Go ahead and tell me; I won't be mad, I'm just confused. I invest *a lot* of time in building relationships. My business depends on it, so any guidance you can provide will be greatly appreciated. (I am serious, if you have insight to share please e-mail me at ed@4eandd.com).

We live in the era of the enlightened business person. Business folks know that technical skills are merely the tip of the iceberg. People skills are invaluable and building relationships is now as much a part of good business as managing cash flow. So why do some of us choose to send signals that push prospective business away? OK, maybe I am getting off track here; what really matters is that if you choose to network, if you believe that building and maintaining relationships is important to building your business- ACT THAT WAY!

Business networking is a fact of life. The reality is that some of us are not comfortable with it. There are no hard and fast rules; the best guideline I can think of is to recognize your comfort level and capabilities and then, to be yourself. I imagine that most of the enthusiasts I meet (those that suddenly go away) are afraid to say "no thanks". There is no obligation to like everyone we meet; not everyone is a fitting prospect for us. That's the way it should be- we have a choice.

So, what will make me happy? Here's my short list:

- When you meet me give me a chance to tell you who I am.
- Take the time to tell me about yourself and what you are looking for.
- Be forthright with me; if I suggest we follow-up tell me you are or are not interested. Don't lead me on; my time is valuable too.

And a couple of things for you to keep in mind:

- Networking is an opportunity to promote yourself *and* to help others; it's not what you ask for, it's what you have to give.
- Building and maintaining relationships isn't only good for business, *it is business!*
- Everyone you meet is a potential benefactor- you for them and they for you; treat everyone as if each of you would be forever benefited by having met.

I'm not invisible; the next time you say you'll call, please do it. I can assure you, I *will* be waiting.