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PROFESSIONAL OPINION

EVENT management specialist Liz Taylor of the Taylor Lynn Corporation (TLC)

I'm often asked about how I generate new business. How do I connect with potential new clients? Where do those lucrative new relationships emerge from? There's one simple answer, and that's networking.

Formal or informal, networking is key. Advertising has a place, but it's expensive and nothing beats referrals for me. We don't operate with a big sales force, so networking and word of mouth are critical to the success of the business.

As owner managers we can all too often be tied to our desks managing the day-to-day of the company, so I appreciate that allocating time for formal networking events can be difficult. That's why I see every moment as a chance to spread the word.

I am extremely proud of my team and the work amazing events we have created for our private and corporate clients, and I am not afraid to tell people about it.

Whether it's on the early bird train down to London, a business flight to Hong Kong or on holiday in Thailand, I talk to the person sat next to me, opposite me or waiting at the bar.

Like any SME should, we spread the word about what we do at any given opportunity. It's simple PR. If you don't share your successes, nobody will do it for you. And, it works. I have generated a wealth of new business leads through this approach.

I love social media networking too, it's at your fingertips and instant, but for TLC it doesn't work in isolation. Making online contacts is a valuable tool – but it's a start. People still buy people in my industry, so face to face contact is essential. And so, organised networking events still have a real place.

Even if you feel you're not good at meeting new people, these types of events bring companies and individuals in business together to share experiences and to make contacts. Pro Manchester operate great examples.

If you can allocate just an hour or two once a month to attend such an event, it will help. Just choose which ones to attend carefully to maximise potential.

I ask for a guest list in advance, so I can be sure my potential clients are attending.

Target who you want to connect with before you go, and make it your mission to do so. Research your targets. Ask the organiser for an introduction. Be prepared to be memorable. Exchange business cards. Engage in conversation that someone will remember you by – dull chat gets you nowhere!

Once that initial connection is made, follow-up by linking on social media channels such as LinkedIn and Twitter, and an appointment for coffee. It's not rocket science, but you will be surprised how successful it will be.

So in short – whether it's a post on LinkedIn, a chance meeting on holiday or a business breakfast, don't be afraid to share what you do. SME's need to shout loudly and proudly about what we can deliver. Take every opportunity.



ATTRACTING AND ENGAGING WOMEN RETURNING TO THE WORKFORCE

Women who take a break from their career make a huge contribution when they return to work, but employers are struggling to attract and retain women returning to the workforce.

Attracting and Engaging Women Returning to the Workforce, the latest whitepaper from specialist professional recruitment consultancy Robert Walters, identifies what women look for in an employer when they return to work and outlines effective strategies to attract and retain women after a career break.

To request a copy of the guide email courtny.edwards@robertwalters.com

www.robertwalters.co.uk/empoweringwomen


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