



FALK COMMUNICATIONS
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Three Lessons to Improve Your Networking Success

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Three Lessons to **IMPROVE** Your Networking Success

If walking into a networking event, gives you pause, take heart.

In this e-book, you will get *step-by-step guidance* on:

- Being a curator of resources
- Pre-event Marketing
- Problem and Solution Questions

In order to receive the referrals you crave and make reciprocal introductions, you have to have a strong network. Giving referrals is networking – in reverse.

Plant the seeds and cultivate your network by making more contacts.

You will find these potential referral sources and resources for your contacts at networking events, meetings of trade associations and events held by professional membership organizations..

Let's begin.

“ *Giving and getting referrals is networking -- in reverse.* ”

Lesson 1: **ATTITUDE**

Go to your next networking event or meeting with this mantra in mind:

It's not about ME.

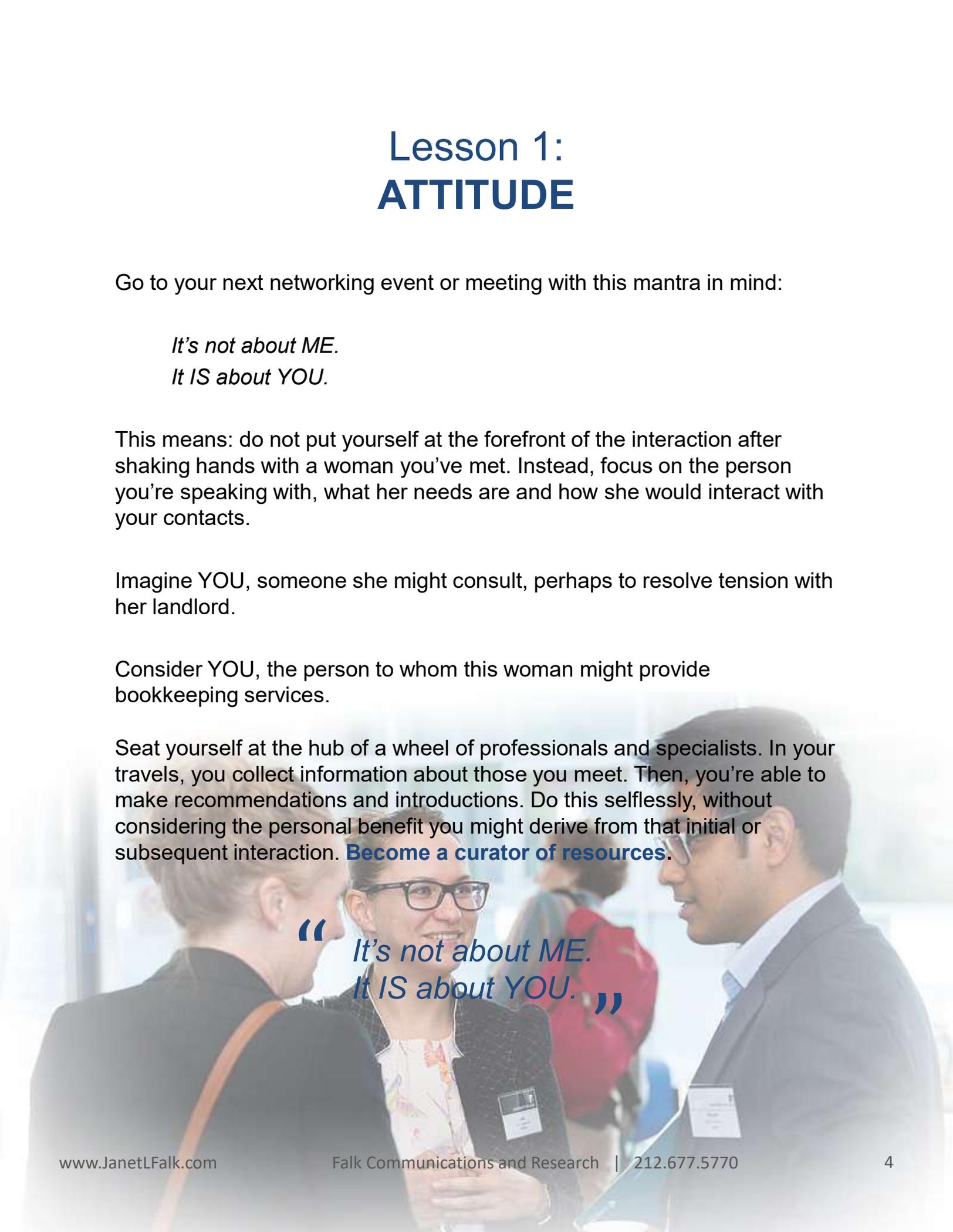
It IS about YOU.

This means: do not put yourself at the forefront of the interaction after shaking hands with a woman you've met. Instead, focus on the person you're speaking with, what her needs are and how she would interact with your contacts.

Imagine YOU, someone she might consult, perhaps to resolve tension with her landlord.

Consider YOU, the person to whom this woman might provide bookkeeping services.

Seat yourself at the hub of a wheel of professionals and specialists. In your travels, you collect information about those you meet. Then, you're able to make recommendations and introductions. Do this selflessly, without considering the personal benefit you might derive from that initial or subsequent interaction. **Become a curator of resources.**



“ *It's not about ME.
It IS about YOU.* ”

Here's how this change in attitude plays out at networking events:

- **Be seen as a connector/Recruit resources:** A client recently asked if I knew someone who might conduct market research for his business. Yes, I know five market research professionals. Two spoke with me and were very interested in the project.
- **Make introductions:** If you know a networking contact is open to meeting a potential client or a potential resource, use your smartphone and dash off an email introducing the pair to each other on the spot.
- **Maintain contacts:** I know Michael will attend a certain monthly group. We don't have to email or speak in between events. We catch up in person.
- **Learn from the speaker:** The presenter stands at the podium because she has specific and timely insights to share with others in the industry or the professional group. Listen up.
- **Stay up to date informally:** A colleague has a new job. A company is expanding locally or nationally. There's talk about a competitor losing market share. You'll hear it through the grapevine. Use your antennae.
- **Be seen as in the know:** Everyone wants to associate with insiders who have their finger on the pulse of the market. You can be that person.

All of these motivations speak to the mantra of keeping YOU (and not ME) at the center of your networking conversations.

Receiving referrals and meeting prospects are more likely to happen in follow-up activities outside the networking event, after others see you as knowledgeable and trustworthy. Serving as a **curator of resources** establishes that expertise and builds that trust.

Lesson 2: **PRE-EVENT MARKETING**

Consider an upcoming networking event held by an industry or professional association where you do not know anyone, yet you plan to meet potential referral sources.

Maximize your attendance at the event by keeping the focus on YOU, meaning the movers and shakers of the organization.

After you register for the event, **visit the website** of the membership or industry organization. Assemble a list of the officers, committee chairs and board members, including their email addresses. If an email is not readily available, you can send a connection request via their LinkedIn profile.

Build a welcoming committee; contact the officers in advance.

One week before the event, write an introductory email or LinkedIn message to each leader with the subject line: ***Will you attend the Networking Cocktail on January 12?*** Describe your background and note your work with a related business, as shown in this example:

“ *Build a welcoming committee; contact the officers and committee chairs in advance.* ”

Sample Pre-event Marketing Email:

Leslie,

Your name came to my attention as an officer of the **Local Accountants Organization**.

I am a **Public Relations professional** who specializes in advising accountants.

Recently, I advised Excellent Accountants on various projects in media relations and client newsletters. I wish to learn more about the Local Accountants Organization and how, if I become a member, I might get involved in your activities.

Perhaps we can chat at the Networking Event; I'm excited to meet you and your colleagues.

Regards,

Janet Falk
www.JanetLFalk.com



The leaders of the organization will be thrilled to hear from you. More than half of them will respond with a big welcome. **Why?** Every business group wants to bring in new members, especially people who offer valuable, specialized experience that would benefit the members and the organization itself. Your email inspires confidence that you are a professional worth welcoming into the fold.

Reply warmly to the notes you receive. Indicate that you will wear a distinctive article of clothing, making it be easy for you both to find each other in a crowded room. Perhaps a woman wears an orange jacket and a man has a green tie. Your new contact is now equipped to seek you out at the event.

One hour before the event, review the names and LinkedIn profiles of the people you contacted and take notes on mutual areas of interest. This annotated list is your game plan.

When you arrive, ask the person at the registration desk where to find one or two of the people on your list. Remember to focus on YOU, not yourself, in conversation. Start by asking about the membership organization itself. Find out why she joined. Learn how she contributes to the group's success. Only discuss yourself and your professional focus in passing.

After you chat and collect her business card, **ask to meet another leader on your list**.

Your new contact will gladly introduce you; doing so enhances her own stature in the other officer's eyes. Imagine the group's president thinking, *"That Mary, she's doing great, bringing in new members!"* Review the names on your list and work the room to meet and be introduced to as many of the officers, board members and committee chairs as possible.

Afterwards, **send a follow-up email** and even a customized LinkedIn connection request. Note how good it was to meet in person after your email correspondence. Say you enjoyed learning about the organization. If you decide to become a member, tell the contact she persuaded you to join. Of course, you are excited to see them at future events.

Write to anyone you did not meet, because they were chatting with others or did not attend. Let them know you joined the association. Suggest a one-on-one coffee chat, to learn how you might get involved in the group.

Congratulate the organization on LinkedIn for a great event, perhaps with a photo of the officers. Link to the group's website as an extra plug.

Your attitude and focus on YOU -- the contacts and the association itself -- will demonstrate that you align with the group. You share interests in the benefits of membership and future activities. This pre-event marketing strategy will enhance your networking success and help you build a larger base of potential referral sources.

“ *A committee chair introduces you to an officer; you become an insider and you make the connector look good.* ”

Lesson 3:

PROBLEM AND SOLUTION QUESTIONS

With a new attitude and focus on YOU, the other person, you became a **curator of resources**.

Your **Pre-event Marketing Plan** built a welcoming committee among the officers of the host organization. At the networking event, you asked them to tell you more about the organization and themselves.

Now it's time to become acquainted with other event attendees, by posing get-to-know-you **Problem and Solution Questions**.

These questions have two purposes: first, they will highlight the types of customers and situations the contact deals with, plus the solutions, products and services they offer.

Second, they will prompt the person to brag about how she did something for that client or in that situation that made it all happen.

Encourage the contact to tell you specifically about their role, not the rest of the team, because **everyone loves to talk about themselves and no one gets to brag often enough**.

“ *Ask questions that prompt a person to brag.* ”

Sample Questions:

How do you help people (or companies): save time, save money, make more money or get more joy from life?

Most businesses offer products and services that save time or money. Or perhaps they build wealth for individuals and companies. Consider that a spa owner or a restaurateur brings joy, enhancing one's leisure time. Asking this question helps you learn more about the new contact's offerings.

What was the highlight of the past year (quarter) for you in helping a client?

This gives the speaker an opportunity to brag. Make it clear you want to know what the person (not the team) did for a client, something that would not have occurred without her role.

That sounds hard. How do you do that?

Ask this question about any aspect to prompt the contact to provide more specifics and explain the process.

Who are you looking to meet (here)?

As a curator of resources, you will likely have a suggestion for an introduction to a potential vendor or client, or even someone else in the room.

How might I be a resource to you?

This opens the door for you to follow up with the contact, by sharing a newsletter you wrote, an article you read or an invitation to a meeting.

If you simply want to chat, ask **Are you originally from Name of City?**

That straight-forward inquiry may lead to all sorts of talk about what brought the person to this city -- or perhaps why they stayed local -- and you can find common ground from there.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps you have noticed this discussion has not referenced **meeting potential clients at networking events**.

That's because most prospects do not look for vendors or consultants at networking events. They attend to keep in touch with the market, catch up with contacts, get the latest news and learn best practices from the speakers.

Likewise, most referral sources are not likely to make introductions to someone they met only a few minutes before.

In your role as a curator of resources, you'll continue to find opportunities to make introductions and to develop stronger relationships with these contacts. Referrals and clients will eventually emerge from these conversations. You've heard it before: people do business with those they know, like and trust.

Networking interactions open the door to longer-term and mutually beneficial discussions. **Start now.**

READY TO PRACTICE?

Invite Janet Falk to conduct these lessons in a one-hour workshop for **YOUR** networking group, so your peers can also improve their networking success. You will look smart for sharing these tips.

Janet Falk of Falk Communications and Research provides Media Relations and Marketing Communications services to business executives, law firms, accounting firms, consultants and nonprofits.

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