

Making It Palatable: Three Reasons Networking Is Like Drinking Fine Wine

By Thom Singer



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Networking is one of the most important things that you can do to advance your career. While your education, experience and expertise are all very important you can never forget that all opportunities come from people. Cultivating mutually beneficial relationships with those who can assist you along your professional journey must always stay top of mind.

Still, many attorneys cringe at the thought of attending business events, meeting new people and establishing new contacts. They view networking as a strong dose of castor oil. However, it is far better to think of your networking efforts as enjoying a fine glass of wine. Here are three reasons why:

1. The opening of a new bottle of wine or beginning a new friendship are both filled with possibilities. When sampling a new wine people always have high hopes for what they will soon discover. The same should be true when you meet someone new in a professional setting. Just as you cannot prejudge the flavor of wine by looking at a label, always remember not to jump to conclusions about the people you meet. If we are always filled with the excitement of possibility with each new encounter, then we will ask more questions and uncover more of what makes human beings complex and exciting. Everyone has something special to offer, and you never know who could refer you business opportunities or otherwise affect your future.

2. People and wine should both be savored and cherished. Nobody would guzzle a bottle of Cristal Champagne or beer bong the Opus One Cabernet. The same thing should be true for the way you treat the people in your life. You cannot rush the creation of new friendships or move too fast in looking to turn these fresh contacts into business opportunities. Additionally, when your schedule gets crazy and the pressures of a legal practice are overwhelming it is easy to ignore the important people you already know. It's easy to rationalize neglect: others will understand when we're not in touch due to being swamped with work. But out of sight is out of mind. If we do not invest time in people, then our friendships will wither and die.

3. Both are best when shared. A good wine is more special when enjoyed with friends. Likewise your network has the most power when you become a connector and make the effort to introduce those you know to each other. Do not hoard your database, but instead share the relationships you have made by connecting the dots and helping others find ways to forge new links. When you make meaningful introductions to those in your network you are positively impacting their career. By doing this you strengthen your own reputation and increase the value you bring to others. People will always remember those who unselfishly shaped their success. Regularly review your database and bring people together. You win when the people around you win.

So uncork your future by embracing the people whom you meet and discovering ways to assist all those you know to achieve higher levels of accomplishment. Pour yourself into your networking.

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