

# How to Schmooze Your Way to Business Success

Steve Tobak; October 25, 2010; bnet.com

Anyone who says that schmoozing isn't critical to business success is just being disingenuous. It's certainly been a big part of my success. If you knew me, this would come as no surprise. My wife calls me a BSer. There may be some truth to that on a personal level, but when it comes to business, I take schmoozing very seriously.

You see, business success is all about relationships, and schmoozing enables relationships. A couple of weeks ago we discussed how your network is your biggest asset, especially for top execs. Well, schmoozing is how you network. It also plays a big role in marketing and sales, getting deals done, developing and maintaining long-term relationships with customers, garnering support from your peers and coworkers, selling your ideas, even getting ahead in your career.

I'm still willing to bet that some of you, like my wife, think schmoozing is all about BSing, telling people what they want to hear, that sort of thing. So not true. In fact, the actual definition of schmooze is "to converse informally, to chat, or to chat in a friendly and persuasive manner especially so as to gain favor, business, or connections." Who among you doesn't consider that to be a critical part of business success?

And while successful schmoozing is all about being open and genuine, about connecting with people, there are plenty of lines you shouldn't cross. Just follow these 10 Tips to Becoming a Great Schmooser and you won't go astray:



1. Don't BS. Let's get one thing straight. BSing destroys credibility. If you want to become a successful executive or leader, don't BS. Period. It doesn't matter how smart others think you are, just how smart you really are.
2. It's never about you; it's always about them. Connecting with people means finding things you have in common, or even different views on a subject you both feel strongly about. You already know you, what you don't know is them.
3. People like to be schmoozed. I know some will disagree, but they're wrong. People like attention, to be noticed, to connect and engage. That is, as long as you're straightforward about it.
4. Be open and genuine. Be you. The most effective way to connect with people and find common ground is to be yourself, with all your native charm, faults, and idiosyncrasies. There's nothing more attractive than genuine humanity - humility, humor, being yourself.
5. Don't overdo it. Next to BSing and trying to be someone you're not, trying too hard is the biggest schmoozing pitfall. Pushing too hard will backfire.
6. Everyone is schmoozable. CEOs, VCs, tough administrative assistants, everyone is schmoozable, for the simple reason that everyone likes the attention ... under the right conditions.
7. Always be appropriate. Never overstep your bounds or make others feel uncomfortable. Never invade someone's personal space. Not sure what the boundaries are? It's different for everyone, so pay attention; they'll let you know.
8. Always be respectful of people's time. Now more than ever, our time is our most precious resource. Enough said.
9. Don't talk at people. Nobody likes to be talked at. They like to be engaged. They like to be listened to. There's a big difference. Just remember: give a little, get a little.
10. Let yourself be schmoozed. Although, by definition, schmoozing is related to persuasion, you'll be better off just thinking of it in terms of long-term relationships. That means you should always be willing to help people first. It's good Karma.