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Training ground

Event to illustrate how effective networking takes practice, knowledge

In the glossary of job-search terms, *networking* is a pretty big entry. Problem is, most job seekers don't bother going beyond the surface.

"Your average out-of-work person thinks networking is sending e-mails to people letting everyone know he or she is out of

work," says Denise Haley, a Chicago-based career coach. "They don't realize that networking goes far beyond a little chit-chat and the occasional e-mail."

Those who do realize the importance of networking are the first to benefit, especially when times are tough, says Larry



When
10-7, Friday, Oct. 23

Where
Mission Hills Country Club, 1677 Mission Hills Rd., Northbrook

More info
• info@biznetexpo.com
• 847-748-7490
• www.biznetexpo.com

Cost
• \$30 at the door
• \$20 online (early registration)

Bloom, owner of ATI Graphics in Highland Park.

"Many of the people complaining about how hard it is to develop business or find a job in this economy are still living in a pre-recession mentality. They're sitting around waiting for the phone to ring because, well, it used to ring so it will ring again," says Bloom. "It doesn't work like that. You have to work harder. Networking has completely



True networking is a learned skill, honed in group settings like the upcoming fair in Northbrook.

trumped other methods. It's much more valuable."

Bloom should know. He says the majority of his upcoming projects are from his networking efforts.

"I look at the schedule on my whiteboard and I see the results of networking," says Bloom. "The proof is right there in front of me."

Bloom and several of his colleagues are so confident in their networking approach that they want to share the opportunity with others, hence the first annual Business Networker's Expo & Social Media Fair, which will be held at Mission Hills Country Club in Northbrook on Friday, October 23.

Bloom, along with J.D. Gershbein, owner of Owlsh Communications in Vernon Hills; Chad Coe, owner of Coe Financial Group in Deerfield and Amy Spitzer, owner of Amy on Call in Highland Park, founded the event.

"Everyone involved is very deep into the Chicago and North Shore networking subculture," Bloom says. "J.D. Gershbein had the idea to do a trade show and expo that was as professional as the others but geared toward small and mid-sized local businesses. You wouldn't have to be Bank of America to participate. We wanted a high-end and highly-professional event that was really accessible."

Bloom says the event quickly morphed into an expo venue that has a ring of sponsoring companies on the perimeter and an open space in the middle to network. In addition, a slate of speakers have been booked to discuss social media topics such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and blogging.

"If you're still confused by how social media can work for you, or even what it all means, you'll want to hear what our speakers have to say," says Bloom. "These are people who have used it to their advantage and are happy to pass that knowledge onto others."

The event has been promoted through local chambers of commerce, through networking sites like LinkedIn and through traditional networking.

Bloom and his partners want to make sure attendees realize the benefits of networking, even if — scratch that — especially if they're not working.

"If you're in transition and you want to learn about networking skills, this is where you'll learn it. It's not about selling products and services. It's about true networking," Bloom says. "People aren't here looking at you and thinking, 'How can I sell this guy something.' It's people looking at you and thinking, 'How can I help this guy. Who do I know who can help him out.'"



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— Larry Bloom, Highland Park