

Productive Habits Are Society's Great Stabilizer

Make the rules and you win. It's simple. Follow up works. It's what will distinguish you from everyone else

by **Bonnie Ross-Parker**

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Habit: A recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behavior that is acquired through frequent repetition.

So much has been written about habits and for many of us, we tend to think of habits as being 'bad' especially when it relates to over indulgence, smoking, drinking, etc.

The great news is that developing solid and productive habits is a catalyst for success in both your personal and professional life and consistently implementing great habits produces great results!

My area of expertise is networking. For those who depend on networking to increase business, we know that when we routinely implement certain strategies we get favorable outcomes. One of the most important ways to get the results you want is to be consistent in the way you follow up. In fact, money is in the follow up. What's the point of networking, collecting business cards and then keeping what you did collect safely in a shoe box, held together by a rubber band? Sound familiar? I hope not! The only way to implement successful follow up is to make it a habit.

Of all the possible choices of those habits that lead to success, I decided to focus on the habit of following up because it's proven over and over again to be my most successful strategy and one of the weakest behaviors for most individuals. I know, you've repeatedly heard the value of follow up and follow through. I'm not the first person to emphasize how critical this step is in building your business. It's a habit that once developed will serve you well because the results of your efforts will become obvious. So, in no particular order, here are my

10 best follow up ideas!

1. Only collect business cards from individuals with who you *intend* to follow up and don't tell anyone you will if you're not going to. (Bad for your reputation!)
2. Connect within 48 hours. You don't have to actually meet or make specific plans within that time frame. Just make the connection. You will easily be forgotten if too much time lapses. The key is for you to stay top of mind with someone with whom you *want* to be connected.
3. Different methods of communication – email, phone call and personal note. The easiest of course is email and that's the method most individuals choose. The more effective way to reach out is a phone call – even if it's just leaving a message. Want to really be remembered as a great connector?

A hand written note is your best follow up strategy. It's the least popular and the most effective because so few individuals actually take the time to do this. Be sure to use personalized business stationery.

4. Invite a new lead, prospect to an upcoming event – email the invitation. That way, you let someone know you are interested in helping them with their business.

5. Make an introduction. In speaking with someone, you have a person in mind they need to know and you're the one to make this happen.
6. You make an introduction for someone who is already one of your great connections and introduce that individual to someone else.
7. Send an article, a website or another piece of information that would be of interest to a new connection.
8. Extend an invitation for lunch. If you do this, you pay. Want to lose credibility? Invite someone and then split the check.
9. Include leads on your newsletter list *after* obtaining their permission. In this way, they are acknowledging their willingness to hear from you and you stay top of mind.
10. Include new contacts in Facebook and LinkedIn – send invitations requesting to be connected.

There may be other follow up ideas you've found to be successful in building business and making those and a few new ones habits will unquestionably bring you even greater success! Let's face it. The marketplace is crowded and everyone is clamoring for their share of business. Passing out business cards and expecting results is really a game of hit and miss.

Having a well thought out plan of how you're going to engage a potential client to become one is critical. The habit of following up conscientiously and consistently is a game changer.

Make the rules and you win. It's simple. Follow up works. It's what will distinguish you from everyone else.



Bonnie Ross-Parker, is a multi-dimensional businesswomen/entrepreneur with a background in education, franchise development, publishing, mentorship, network marketing, and community development. She combines vision with a unique

set of skills. Formerly the Associate Publisher of *The Gazette Newspaper/Atlanta*, Ms. Ross-Parker now focuses her energies as the Chairwoman of the Cooperative Business Community for TNNWC Group LLC. She is the champion and chief advocate for the establishment of the interconnection of business networks around the world for the purpose of building the [Global Interconnected Cooperative Business Community \(GICBC\)](#).

In 2002, Ms. Ross-Parker created and incorporated [The Joy of Connecting®](#) gatherings for women. Nationwide, The Joy of Connecting® is an absolutely unique interpersonal customer acquisition/marketing program serving entrepreneurial, business women and professionals who are serious about growing their businesses. In September of 2009, [The Latina Joy of Connecting®](#) was created to bring a strong bond of sisterhood to women multi-ethnically and internationally.

Ms. Ross-Parker is a graduate of George Washington University, and earned a Certification in Network Marketing at the University of Chicago. Several of her articles on owning one's own business and entrepreneurship have appeared in publications including: *Wealth Building, Home Business Magazine, Business to Business and Entrepreneur's Business Start-Ups*.

In 2002, Ms. Ross-Parker received The Athena Award ~ an honor designed to acknowledge women of leadership in cities throughout the United States. In September, 2005 she was honored by the Women's Leadership Exchange, a New York based organization, as an Influential Woman of Georgia and currently serves on their Atlanta Advisory Board.

She is a featured speaker with the Direct Selling Women's Alliance. In May of that same year, Bonnie was honored by The International Toastmaster's Organization of Georgia with their annual Communication & Leadership Award. Most recently, Bonnie Ross-Parker was one of 8 women selected from hundreds of submissions to be recognized as part of the traveling *Princess Di Exhibit's Women's Wall of Achievement: Celebrating Atlanta Women*, 2010.
