

# NETWORKING

## Is an Effective Way to Promote EMS

**N**etworking is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways for EMS managers to promote their service to others. It's an essential skill because it can help you develop partnerships and build contacts that can promote your service.

"Networking will quickly open doors for you," said paramedic and emergency room physician assistant Jamie Bingham of Paducah, Texas. "It's a great way for you to promote your service and to educate others about what you do."

EMS managers should participate in local networking opportunities through the chamber of commerce, Rotary and other service clubs, Toastmasters, even as troop leaders for scouts. "For an EMS manager, one of the best networking opportunities is through the local boards within your community," Bingham advised. By joining a local board — whether it's a school district, a non-profit organization or a public agency — you're in a better position to inform other key decision-makers about your EMS service. Networking also is one of the best ways that an EMS organization can maintain a high level of understanding, education and support within the community.

If you're not networking, you're "not working," according to Andrea Nierenberg, consultant and author of *Million Dollar Networking* and *Nonstop Networking*. "The goal of networking is to discover new business opportunities, build and nurture those relationships, and keep powerful contacts for life," she explained.

Networking is not about constantly selling your service. That's the negative connotation that most people associate with networking. "Some people only use networking when they need something," said Nierenberg. Rather, she suggested, networking should be "about relationship building, creating a connection, communication and follow-up. Nobody does something for us until they build trust."

When you're networking, Nierenberg said, always look for the opportunity to help others first. Ask questions, gather information, offer contacts and advice. Then, those people will be there for you when you need them.



## Six Tips to BECOME A BETTER NETWORKER

### 1 Develop a 20-second pitch

Want to get people's attention immediately? Nierenberg recommends that when you're introducing yourself to people outside of emergency services, instead of saying you work for an EMS service, tell people you serve the community's emergency medical needs. Then you can go delve a little deeper of who you work for and a little about your organization.

### 2 Take the initiative

Don't wait for people to come to you. Approach them first. Before attending an event, do some research on the groups that you know may be there. "Always be thinking proactively," advised Nierenberg.

### 3 Nurture your current contacts

Always ask people their preferred method of contact. Then touch base with them as often as you can.

### 4 Listen and ask questions actively

According to Carrie Perrien Smith, owner of Soar with Eagles, a performance consulting company in Arkansas, concentrate on learning about the people that you meet in a network setting. "You should be engaged and interested," she advised. "Don't be afraid to ask personal questions, such as what city they live in or where they are from. Ask about their families. They aren't just business contacts; treat them like new friends." Nierenberg added, "When you listen, you will learn who they are, what is important to them, how you can help them, and how they can help you. It all starts with giving; give your ears and learn from the other person."

### 5 Always carry your business cards

"Business cards are the currency of the networking transaction," Smith said. If you happen to arrive at a networking event without business cards, make sure you get the card of the other person and send information the next day.

### 6 Think about how you could help those you meet

Ask yourself in every conversation, "How can I help this person?" One of the best ways to promote your EMS service is to build relationships with others in the community. People want to do business with other people they like and trust. Use a networking event as an opportunity to get to know people better and find out how you can help them grow their business. Your networking will be successful once you start looking at it as a way to help others.