

# Successfully Build Your Business Network with “Eblasts”

By Aurélie Hiernaux

During a business meeting, one common thing easily noticed is the plentiful exchange of business cards. It's after all a good way to keep in touch with other business people and thus build your own business network.

But this desirable scenario is not always the case. Here's one example: say you're a guest speaker at a business event. When your talk is done, even if you've done exceptionally well, your audience, including potential future clients, will not automatically contact you. If you have not taken the important step of getting your audience's business cards and then staying in touch with them regularly, you will have lost a grand opportunity to further build your business network.

Thus, in such a case, you must *not* simply throw whatever cards you bring back into a basket at your office and forget about them. You must add all e-mail addresses from your contacts to your e-mail list, perhaps putting them into Constant

Contact or ACT or some other similar contact database.

Publishing expert Jia-Ling Loo put it this way in her article “Why Staying in Touch by Email is Crucial to Publishing Success,” published online: “Gathering new business cards at every possible opportunity can never be enough. It's what you DO with these new contacts that reaps rewards.”

Business cards and emails however are not the endpoint for staying connected with other business people. A next step is crucial for achieving the same result on a long-term basis—sending eblasts, i.e., e-mails sent all at once to your entire e-mail list. Though too many businesses ignore this practice, sending eblasts of this kind offers several benefits:

- First, an eblast can be in any kind of format you like
- Second, an eblast need not take too much of your valuable time (compared to an e-newsletter)



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- Third, it's a way of communicating with your business contacts that can *systematize* such communications

What's the goal and consequence of sending regular eblasts? Simply that you end up generating word-of-mouth within your business network. Indeed, as in the example above of you-as-a-public-speaker, business people tend to forget to keep reminding their connections about their field of expertise and as a result, despite the simplicity of doing so via eblasts, over time their connections forget too! This means colleagues, prospects, even clients

talking about your good work, your great skills, your professional accomplishments and other word-of-mouth slows down to a halt.

As Jia-Ling Loo summarized in her article, "It's really astonishing how few people (and companies) actually take the time to touch base with their newfound contacts, not to mention with past and present clients." Yes... quite remarkable!

Nowadays social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Linked In are all very popular and visible on the Internet as well. They too can be effective in terms of building one's business network and keeping you "top-of-mind." But it's also important not to rely solely on these vehicles since eblasts to an e-mail list allow us to send eblast messages to *all* our contacts, not just those subscribing to (or checking in with) Twitter, Facebook etc. Everyone checks their regular e-mail at least a few times per day, though many may check for their social networking messages only sporadically.

To fine-tune this process, consider also these tips for effective eblast communication:

1. When sending an eblast, make sure to include a button for forwarding your eblast to recipients' friends and business contacts.
2. On your website, place a box in a prominent position so that visitors can easily sign up for your e-list.
3. Do not make people answer lots of information about themselves in order to get onto your e-list.

Name, company name, telephone, e-mail and how did he/she hear about you may be enough. Keep things simple.

4. Always send a nice note to everyone before you officially plunk them onto your e-list. Say something like, "Great to meet you yesterday at the Business Event. Let's put each other on our respective e-lists so we can officially stay in touch."
5. Never *purchase* an email list. Every email on your list should be that of someone you have actually met even if tangentially. E-lists work best when permission-based.

Finally, an eblasts must not be a mere self-promotional advertisement for your business but a message of relevance and genuine value. Here are a few ideas:

1. Offer a short case study of a recent successful project including lessons for your recipients to observe.
2. Announce when you win an award or earn a new educational degree or professional certification.
3. Let your contacts know that you have just published a book or article, which are both fantastic ways to boost your credibility.
4. Offer your opinion of recent business events or business news.
5. Offer clients an "alert" about a change in a law, or a new government policy that might affect them.

6. Write a review of a relevant business book.
7. Create an e-newsletter, though if you do this be careful not to bog yourself down with too ambitious a format. Again, keep things simple!

Despite all I've said here, some people will still shrink from sending out blasts for fear of contributing to the daily flood of spam. Though this argument is understandable, if you translate it into lack of action, i.e., you *never* send eblasts at all, you end up committing a grievous error. In short, you insure their invisibility. So send out eblasts only once a quarter or only once a month but do send out eblasts at some pace periodically throughout the year. In this way you will begin building a strong and successful business network that will raise your visibility above that of your competition keep word-of-mouth about you favourable and ongoing.