

Networking Increases Net Worth!

By Trey Welstad

Being an entrepreneur is more than just running a business; it is a lifestyle. My name is Trey Welstad, and I am a 20-year-old website developer and entrepreneur. I have always had a passion for running my own business. It started out simply, but over the six years that I have been in “business”, it has become part of my life. The reason I am writing this article is because I want to emphasize the importance of networking. But first you need to know a little about me.



Photo By Bethany Leyrer

I started making websites as a hobby in the sixth grade because I was curious as to how they were created and accessible to the entire world. It really piqued my interest that anyone could create something from nothing and get it around the globe for free. I found out about a website design internship for high school students through Minot Public Schools. I talked with Craig Nansen, director of the technology department, and he asked me to be the newest addition to the webmaster team. The team consisted of three other students: Dirk Monson, Peder Rice, and Rob Scheeler. Working with the team helped me learn faster than I would have on my own, and I could always depend on them to help me with solving difficult problems. So, without even knowing it, I was already networking toward success.

Dirk and Peder created a business specializing in website design. Appearing to be a simple process, I decided I would start my own company. I did not know what I was doing, but with the help of others I was able to officially create a registered business. It was very exciting, and I soon acquired my first job designing a site for a local auto-repair shop. Looking back, I probably was not fully prepared to take on a business’s website, but I am glad that I had the opportunity because I learned a lot through the hands-on experience. With the help of the team, I was able to accomplish all of this and more, which leads me to my topic of networking.

Networking: To the “tech guy” in me it is the connection of computers to each other, but to the “business guy” in me it is the acquisition of professional contacts. Meeting new people allows you to get your information out to the public. Since you represent your business, your personal character and professionalism will reflect how your business is portrayed in the community. The contacts you establish will distribute your company’s name to potential clients. In return, they can depend on your company to spread the word of their business. To top it all off, you have one more person to assist you with any problems or questions about your business. This could include legal aspects, company image, new ideas, and revamping old methods. It is a win-win situation for all involved so get out there and meet people!

Here are a couple of examples on how networking has helped me. Dirk Monson and myself were asked to work at the Marketplace for Kids Education Day (an annual showcase of young students’ innovative ideas) and create a video for the closing ceremonies. By donating our services we built a good rapport with the individuals running

the event. As a result, Dirk has them as a website client, and I am a featured entrepreneur on that website and assisted with the Technology section of their Learning Guide. Additionally, I had the chance to promote my company on those mediums at no cost. I helped them out, and they returned the favor.

My second example helped me acquire a big contract. I helped out Kathryn Pederson, the director of the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative, by creating an extensive registration program for their annual conference. During the process of programming the site, I became acquainted with Kathryn. From that moment forward she has become a close mentor for business ideas and personal issues. (Note: Finding someone who has had many experiences can help you avoid problems. It is like having a cheat-book for life.) She became the director of another program and told me that they needed a website. It was a big project but she knew I could handle it. Her assistance led to my company getting the contract. Having people know your capabilities can really come in handy.

You are starting a business and wondering how people will find you. My advice: network with others. You can get your name distributed, free advertising, and many new clients by focusing on making new friends in the business world. Making money will come eventually, but to get a great start, volunteer your services and start out working for less so you can build up a base of professional contacts. It may cost you some money up front, but you will be glad you took this approach down the road. Good luck in your endeavors! □

