



Networking Groups vs. Leads Groups – Is There Really a Difference?

By Sharan Tash

In the world of networking there are many terms that people need to learn, but understand that these terms are general. Networking groups and Leads groups are two of those terms that have a specific meaning for me, and many of you out in cyber land, but for someone else, they can blow the definitions away. What I am proposing here are MY definitions.

Networking groups are a gathering of individuals that get together on a regular basis to get to know each other and share referrals. These groups have individuals from many different areas, but do not restrict the number of people from one category. You may have 2 bankers or more in one group. You may have 2 real estate agents or more in the group. There is no exclusivity. My first exposure to networking groups was through the [Buffalo Grove Area Chamber of Commerce](#). There were several bankers, real estate agents, mortgage brokers, and insurance agents in the group. Differentiation was VERY important in this group, and so was the impression you gave to the group. Personally, I did business with the people that were givers, showed up every meeting, were on time, sat down when their 15 second introduction time was done (whether finished or not), and presented themselves well to the group.

Leads groups are a gathering of individuals that get together on a regular basis to get to know each other and share referrals (sound familiar). Unlike the networking groups, leads groups restrict the number of people from each category to one representative. That means you will only have one residential real estate broker, one commercial real estate broker, one mortgage broker, one travel agent, one banker (unless the group decides to divide this category into personal and commercial banking). Examples of Leads groups include [BNI](#), [LeTip](#), and [Northwest Business Builders](#). The idea in these groups is to refer ONLY the people in the group you are affiliated with. So if Sue Jones is a member of your BNI group and she is a commercial real estate broker, when you meet someone that needs commercial real estate, you are suppose to refer Sue Jones, not someone else you may know.

My problem with leads groups is that everyone in the leads group may not be referable. Let's take Sue Jones again. Sue may be in my BNI group, but I know [Patrice Marks](#) from [National Realty Network](#) whom I sit on a committee with in [NAWBO](#). I have heard great things about Patrice and have referred Patrice to friends before joining BNI. I am not going to refer Sue Jones for a few reasons:

1. Patrice has always made my clients happy
2. I have not heard anyone in BNI thank Sue for referrals
3. Patrice is always being thanked by people for the referrals she makes
4. Sue does not show up steadily for our meetings and when she does, she is late

This is a downfall for leads groups. You cannot refer someone just because they are in a group with you. Your reputation is on the line. Refer the best person for the job.

So, now we have an idea of what Networking groups are vs. Leads groups - then comes [Dean Klassman](#) and his group called [The Networking Group](#). Dean's group is not a networking group, but it is considered a leads group according to the definition above. What makes this group unique is that there are over 100 members, we meet once per month, and Dean is trying to help the group become better connectors.

Networking Group vs. Leads Group - Is there a difference? Yes there is, but it really doesn't matter which one you join. If you do not know how to make connections for others, and you are in it only for YOUR bottom line, no matter what type of group you join it won't matter. You won't get a referral from me or other connectors. Be a giver of referrals. Be a strategic relationship networker. Practice the skills and art of Boomerang Networking and remember what I practice, "I do not have the right to ask you for anything unless I have helped you in some way first."

To learn more about the art of Boomerang Business Development, [Boomerang Networking](#)[™] and [Boomerang Sales](#) and to develop the skills of listening, asking questions and giving, contact Sharan Tash at [The Professional Networker](#) or email Sharan@SharanTash.com.

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