

# The 007 of networking: Brian Olson

By Ronni Hannaman: For the Nevada Appeal



Cheri Glockner, left, presents Brian Olson, owner of Offsite Data Depot, with an award from the Carson City Chamber of Commerce recognizing him as the top networker. Photo provided

The Chamber continually touts the importance of self-marketing. Some businesses get it; many don't. Those who don't go by the wayside not knowing why. Those who are successful understand it was because they worked hard at making connections and taking advantage of every possible opportunity to grow.

Shaking a few hands and attending events where there is certain to be business connections is one of the most integral components of any business plan — and that is in good times and bad. The investment of a handshake is small; the return can be monumental.

With a positive attitude, outstretched hand and a pocketful of business cards, there's no reason not to be successful, whatever the business.

The Chamber just recognized its first top networker who has taken the true concept of networking to heart. At the March Breakfast Club held at Finucci's Grand Central, Brian Olson of Offsite Data Depot was honored as a true example of one who "gets it." He is an excellent role model.

Everywhere you look, there's Brian. He so believes in the power of networking that one wonders how he ever finds time to relax.

Here, Brian sheds light on his philosophy and success:

Ronni Hannaman: You are truly a man about town, seen at almost every business function in our community. Why is it important to you to attend all these functions?

Brian Olson: Most of us know that good business relationships are important for success. When I moved here to start Offsite Data Depot, I learned right away that in Carson City, these relationships aren't just important, they're critical. There's an old saying that says, "People do business with people they know and trust." You can't expect people to get to know you and trust you if they only see you once in a while. They need to know that you're committed to the success of the local community and the businesses in it.

RH: Networking is not an easy task for many, yet you make it seem so easy. What is your secret?

BO: The key to building those relationships is showing them that you sincerely care about them and their business. Listen to them. Find out what they want and then find a way to help them get it. If you help enough people get what they want, it'll come back to you.

RH: Your personal philosophy is to give to be able to receive. Explain that in business terms.

BO: You can't go to the bank and withdraw money if you didn't deposit some first. The same goes in business. I wouldn't expect someone to refer business to me if I've never even tried to refer business to them. If people know that you really care about them and the success of their business, they're more likely to return the favor. Whether it's shopping, eating or getting your car fixed, I always encourage people to do business with the people I've met at local networking functions. I carry their business cards in my car so I can recommend them when I see an opportunity.

I believe that all of us need to give to the local communities that support our businesses. That's why I belong to organizations like the Carson City Rotary Club. My resources are limited. By working with other Rotarians those resources are multiplied. Together, we can do more for the community than any one of us could do on our own.

RH: How do you find the time to be a consistent networker?

BO: My key to consistency is not "finding" the time to network, but "making" the time. I book functions on my calendar as soon as they are announced. Another good networking tool is to regularly have lunch or coffee with other business people. You're going to eat lunch anyway. Why not have lunch with someone new and learn more about them and their business?

As far as the networking functions, it's work, not a social event. I'm there to meet new people, build relationships, give and get business referrals and to spread the word about my business. That said, there's no reason you can't have fun while you're working. There are some great business people here in Carson City and many of them have become good friends.

RH: Add anything you wish

BO: You can't just hang a sign in the window and expect customers to walk in the door, especially in my business. Today, more than ever, businesses need to do everything they can to differentiate themselves from their competition and create value for their clients. I believe that, by consistently showing up for networking functions (to build business relationships), getting involved in the local community and giving to others without expecting anything in return, you'll greatly improve your chances for success.

- Ronni Hannaman is director of the Carson City Chamber of Commerce.