



Cultivating Engagement: Let's Talk About Connections

The number one reason why people join an association is to “make connections.” We know that’s a common reason and yet many new members find it difficult to actually make them. As a longtime member of the Boulder Chamber and a relatively new Austin Chamber member (since I moved here in January), I can speak from a member’s perspective on what it takes to make the right connection.

As a new member to the Austin Chamber, I have thought hard about the types of people I want to connect with based on what I need personally (e.g., handyman, massage therapist) and for my business (e.g., integrated marketing plan, expertise on moving to an e-delivery for much of training). It’s helped me to create a very distinctive 45-second request I can use at networking opportunities to better communicate what I’m seeing when I’m there to “network.”

So how can we help new and existing members find the right connections for them?



Jeffrey Cufaude, in his blog post [Cultivating Engagement: Let's Talk About Connections](#), provides a great technique to help members connect with others.

This is my favorite paragraph from the post:

“. . . it’s important to note that we live in an era where people have likely developed fairly extensive networks prior to coming to the association, often through social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and others. So where the connection question *used to be one-way* (the association helping connect members to desired resources), we now have an *opportunity to make it two-way* (members helping connect the association to valued contacts).”

If we asked members to use this template when posting on SM or at networking programs, they might just find who and what they need: *I'm looking to connect with people who are _____, who know _____, who can _____.* Jeffrey suggests that associations can use this same template to help members recommend connections that will help the association, too.

I think I’m going to use this template in my upcoming networking opportunities. Why don’t you try it, too?

Cathi Hight is president of Hight Performance Group and has over 20 years’ experience in performance improvement. She helps organizations build sustainable futures, improve processes, increase productivity, and develop staff & member loyalty. Hight Performance Group is the developer of the Member Retention Kit. Cathi may be reached at (720) 304-0747 or e-mail: cathi@hightperformance.com.