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Networking and Royal Temptations



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Back in 2004, when we had our first conversation with Oonagh Williams, owner of Royal Temptations Catering, we remember saying to each other, "This lady knows everyone." She told us where she networked, where we should (or should not) network. Little did we know that she works very hard to know and be known by everyone.

Over the past four years, we have seen her everywhere: at Chamber meetings, at **BNI** (Business Networking International), at **BPW** (Business and Professional Women), at the **ABWA** (the American Business Women's Association), the **Merrimack Valley Venture Forum**, and at the **New Girls Network**. There was even a networking group in Boston that we attended together. That list doesn't count the other organizations with which she is associated: **Southern New Hampshire Women's Business Network**, **Merrimack (NH) High School**, **Culinary Advisory Committee of Milford (NH) High School**, and **Pinkerton Academy**.

Oonagh also appears on "Cook's Corner" on WMUR, an ABC affiliate TV station. "Cooking with Oonagh" is now in its third season on local cable TV stations. Her goal is to have a nationwide TV show. Want to see her in action? Go to <http://www.royaltemptations.com> to watch her YouTube videos.

How does she do it all? Well, to begin with, Oonagh signs up for an organization for a year. From the beginning, her goal is to be approachable, becoming an active member of the group. This Kathy can verify because she is an active member of the ABWA and was Vice President of the NH Chapter when Oonagh signed up. She began to bring treats to our meetings (a great way to make friends); she volunteered to be the hospitality committee chair for the following year; and she ran a Team Building exercise "Cooking Challenge." She also participated in a Member Spotlight. Members share their business stories. Another month, she spoke about her experience of making YouTube videos as well as instructions on how to make and post them.

As you can imagine, every member knew Oonagh after only one or two meetings, everyone knows her business, knows how delicious her food is, AND they pass the word to others. She's a networking success story!

At the end of each year, she determines the ROI: has she gotten business from each group; has she learned something to help her grow professionally or personally? Her time is as important as money to her, so she takes a careful look at her experiences.

Oonagh's entire business is built on networking. What other networking does Oonagh do? She teaches cooking classes at local libraries and at her home (Kathy's going to learn about Greek cuisine on July 11th); Oonagh is generous with recipes on her website and through her TV spot; she also runs the pie baking contest as part of the Merrimack (NH) July 4th celebration. One special thing Oonagh does is to give Lithuanian Cooking Demonstrations at a Nashua library originally devoted to Ethnic Studies.

That is an interesting story. Back in 1998, Oonagh was asked to do a demonstration of Lithuanian cooking. Not knowing much about Lithuanian cooking, she had research to do. That class had seven attendees.

That class was such a success, it led to others. Today, she conducts regular demonstrations, and approximately 43 people attend. Only about 50% are of Lithuanian descent and tell her that the recipes bring back memories of what "grandmother used to cook" but the recipes had not been passed on.

She even made a trip to Lithuania in 2005 to perfect her knowledge, attending Vilnius University to study the language during summer school, research the food in supermarkets and restaurants, cooking a dinner party for the acting German Ambassador (whose wife was a member of Oonagh's language class), gave a demonstration to teachers, and browsed bookstores for English language cookbooks. She now boasts the largest collection of Lithuanian cookbooks written in English in the United States. She has bought them, she has inherited them.

Oonagh's advice to new chefs or new networkers:

- Pick organizations that are good for you. Some can be too big for a small company. Don't just pay your dues...get involved. Your name on their 'members list' is an obvious trick most people see through.
- If you're volunteering, do not rely on the organization to advertise for you. Start your own database, and send out your own notices.
- Libraries have their own network. If you give a class in one, others will become aware of what you do, and ask you to present. Libraries have an aura of credibility that rented hotel rooms do not.
- If you're a chef, your best advisement is your food. Help them to taste it!
- Long-term relationships lead to clients.
- Once someone has tasted and enjoyed your services, get them to spread the word.
- You MUST get past your comfort level to be a successful networker.

Check out her company website for great recipes, videos, newspaper articles she had written
<http://www.RoyalTemptations.com>.

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