



**Canton Chamber of Commerce
Connect Group**

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Connect Group Guidelines

PURPOSE: Our purpose is to enhance each others respective businesses by creating a strong network, sharing best practices, learning from each other, building business relationships and generating a network chain of referrals for members of the group.

As members, responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Attend all scheduled meetings
- Arrive on time for meetings
- Participate in meeting discussions
- Provide referrals to group members and act on referrals given
- Make efforts to bring in new members

Because we are limiting these groups to individuals who are representing a specific industry, we ask that you respect the attendance requirement and send a substitute if there is an instance that you cannot attend. If for any reason you cannot continue to participate, you will need to let us know so we can fill your spot.

One-minute presentations are part of the agenda and serve to introduce yourself and your business to the group. It is important for members to vary these introductions because networking involves getting to know people – people don't refer strangers to their friends; friends refer friends.

Members will have an opportunity to give a 5-minute presentation (one per meeting,). The 5-minute presentation is a great way to hone your presentation skills. These will be pre-assigned and provided to each member prior to January of the upcoming year.

Members are encouraged to meet with other members of their group at least once in the program. Networking is about building relationships. These lunch and learn meetings are encouraged.

Referrals and testimonials .If referrals have been given outside of meeting, referrals must still be mentioned and discussed within the meeting setting for the benefit of guests and other members to help clarify purpose of the Business Referral Group – to pass leads, build relationships and increase networking and sales skills.

What is a good referral? The best form of referral is a person introducing two people who need each other and can conduct business. Simply handing a name and a phone number is not a good referral. People didn't join a Business Referral Group to make more cold calls. They want qualified referrals. When you pass a referral, you are telling the receiving party that you believe you have "matched" needs and have prepared a prospective customer to expect a call.

Testimonials: This portion of the meeting is almost as crucial as the referral part. Why? You're expected to share the results of initial referral calls and what you learned from one-on-one meetings. These show two things:

The caliber of referrals
Your willingness to get to know people and share what you've learned

Guidelines

- All group **members must be members in good standing with the Canton Chamber of Commerce at the time of their first meeting**. All members must keep their Chamber dues active and current. All Chamber Connect members must be individually represented in the Business Directory of the Canton Chamber of Commerce.
- The purpose of the Chamber Connect group is to pass referrals to those members of the Chamber Connect group **only**. Members should strive to bring at least one referral to each meeting. If a referral cannot be passed, members must give a positive testimonial for someone else in the group or a positive testimonial to the group itself. The purpose is to pass business, grow our businesses and to promote Chamber Connect as a benefit for potential Chamber members.
- Only one person per business category (such as financial, retail, etc.) may attend the group meetings and be a member of the group. Only one representative per company can be involved in the group at any time. Members may have a colleague or an associate fill in for them if they cannot attend a meeting. **A substitute may not be someone who is in an already occupied category, or a member of the Connect group.**
- Members must have an email address on file with the Canton Chamber of Commerce.
- Members may participate in only one Chamber Connect group at a time.
- The Primary Business category must be specific and encompass the primary objective of your company. For example, if you sell houses, but you also sell commercial real estate, you have to select which of the two is your primary business and list that as your primary business on the application. The category that you select may be amended by the chair or vice chair of the group or Chamber staff members to ensure that it is specific to meet the requirements.
- ATTENDANCE: In order to have a viable group, attendance is very important. Each member is permitted three absences every six months (January through June and July through December). If a member misses a meeting, member must provide a substitute. The member must provide the substitute with a personal advertisement about your business as well as one lead or testimonial to pass. If the member does not provide a sub, the member will take an absence for that meeting. Substitutes can only sub for one member at the meeting.
- ATTENDANCE: Arriving on time is a sign of respect to the members of the group. If a member arrives after the meeting begins, (7:45 a.m.) that member is considered late. After a member has incurred four late arrivals, an absence is recorded. If a member leaves before the meeting is officially adjourned, an early leave is recorded. After a member has incurred four early leaves, an absence is recorded.
- Once a member has been absent the allowable number of times, his or her category will be opened and another member of the Canton Chamber may have the opportunity to apply to the group. If a member's spot is still available once he or she leaves the group, he or she will have to apply and be voted into the group again. The member can only apply to the group after a six-month period has elapsed.
- Meetings are structured to run for approximately one hour. This may vary depending on the size of the group. Please plan to stay the entire time in respect for the other members of the group.
- Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during the meeting in deference to other members of the group.
- If a member does not have a referral to pass during the referral passing segment of the meeting, the member should give a positive testimonial to someone else in the group with whom they have done business or to the group itself. To keep a positive tone to the meeting, members should refrain from saying, "I don't have a referral today," or "I don't have anything for the group." Our goal is to create a positive business environment.
- A guest brought to the group will be counted as a referral.
- Leadership roles (detailed in the next section) will be rotated on an annual basis. Terms of leadership begin in January and end in December of the next year for the first rotation. The second rotation begins in January and ends in December. **The first leadership team appoints the next leadership team.**
- Guidelines may be amended as the need arises.
- Members are encouraged to limit their participation to one referral based networking group.

Code of Ethics

1. I will provide services and or products at the quality and price that I have quoted.
2. I will be truthful and maintain integrity with members and their referrals.
3. I will build trust and establish goodwill with members and their referrals.
4. I will follow up on referrals I received with expediency.
5. I will maintain a positive attitude toward fellow Chamber Connect chapter members.
6. I will maintain the ethical standards of my profession.
7. Understanding that it is givers who gain, I will seek to give first.

What is a Lead? What is a Testimonial?

WHAT IS A LEAD?

A lead is the name and contact information of a person or business with whom you have spoken and laid the groundwork for one of your group members to contact.

An example of a good lead: You are speaking with Joe, and he mentions that he is thinking of getting a new website. You tell him that you have a business associate who does a great job of website production and ask if you may have him call Joe. Joe agrees. At the next Chamber Connect meeting, you pass a lead to Sam so he can contact Joe. On our scale of 1 through 5, this lead would be considered a 5, a hot lead. These are the kinds of leads we are seeking for the group.

An example of a cold lead: You visited a restaurant and observed that the menu was printed from the company's outdated printer. The menu was in need of professional printing and proofreading. You gathered the information and passed this along to Harry who is a printer in the group.

While the cold lead may actually result in Harry doing business with the restaurant, he is essentially making a cold call when he contacts the restaurant. You are encouraged to pass a cold lead when you think it might benefit a group member, but cold leads are not the basis of referral passing.

WHAT IS A TESTIMONIAL?

A testimonial is a small speech about a fellow group member with whom you have done direct business. This should also serve to convince other members in the group to use his or her services and pass referrals to that person. Testimonials should be used when you do not have a lead to pass.

You may schedule appointments with fellow group members for a Lunch and Learn in order to get to know each other better. You can use the information you learn about them to give them a testimonial later on.

Each participant needs to contribute every meeting. You may bring a guest, pass a lead, or give a Testimonial but **everyone** must do one or the other each week!

WHAT IS A LUNCH & LEARN?

A Lunch & Learn is a scheduled appointment that you have made with someone within the group to get to know them better. This is set up outside of the weekly meeting time, either for lunch, coffee or just a one-on-one at their place of business. It is a way that you can learn more about them and form a relationship in order to pass more referrals to them and so they can pass more to you as well.