

# Significant Important Networking (SIN) City

*Not everything that happens in Vegas needs to stay in Vegas.*

**M**y eagerness to attend this year's STLE Annual Meeting in Las Vegas comes from the anticipation of networking with such a vast cross section of our industry.

In my line of work, it behooves me to have a wealth of knowledge or at least access to a wealth of knowledge. My credibility increases when I have an immediate answer and soars with its exactness. I grow my reputation with each different question I am able to answer, and I have networking (primarily through STLE) to thank for it.

Case in point, I was conducting on-site training at a group of coal mines and was asked if I knew the source of nickel in the final drive of a particular model of bulldozer but only their newest ones. I quickly admitted I did not know off the top of my head but would ask the right people.

One of my local section directors works for the manufacturer of the dozer and, better yet, in the field of root cause failure analysis. I sent him a quick e-mail, and he did not reply back but rather answered by forwarding the question to a senior product engineer and an engineer in the lower power train support group. The latter responded back to me with her assessment: They had switched to a high-nickel bearing recently and what we were seeing was merely typical break-in wear.

I often share this story with groups that I train as a thinly veiled STLE recruitment speech. If I had simply phoned the manufacturer's technical support line, I would have taken a longer route before arriving at the answer and had to have answered a lot more questions first. The power of my network helped me help my customer, helped my credibility by having a thorough answer and helped my reputation by simply being able to arrive at the answer.

At last year's STLE Annual Meeting, I was approached by one of our past presidents, one whom had previously visited my local section. He was wondering if I knew of a company in Western Canada that could do some private labeling and packaging. I offered the best answer I could, which was merely suggestions of one or two places he could try but nothing really firm.

The next day was the President's Luncheon, and I found a seat at an empty table that quickly filled with other singletons. As I

chatted with my tablemates, I soon discovered that one of them worked for a logistics firm that arranged services like packaging and labeling for all of Canada. I asked him for his card and if he minded if I passed it along to someone else looking for such a service. Needless to say, he was very happy that I was helping him make this connection. I felt great satisfaction at being able to pass that card along, even though it was not advantageous to my employer.

I believe in the Golden Rule, which implies that you would treat others as they would treat you, and I believe it applies to professional life just as much as personal. Helping others, even when it does not immediately benefit you or your company directly,

only benefits you in the long run.

The art of networking involves connecting with people at every opportunity, not just when you need something. The acme of networking is giving without expectation, simply helping someone achieve his or her own goals. And the perk of networking is connecting with others who may help you in the future, either directly or by connecting you with someone from their network.

Never hesitate to connect with anybody and everybody—you can't say with certainty that you will never help each other. Start with "hello." It doesn't hurt in the very least, and you might make a new friend (remember that all of our friends were once strangers to us). Then the only thing that might hurt is saying "good bye."

See you in Vegas! I'll be sure to say hello to you when we meet.



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