

Dropping Breadcrumbs: How to Use Mini-Value Propositions at Networking Events

By [LawVision](#) on March 4, 2016

Dear Jim,

It was a pleasure to meet you at the North American Insulation Industry Conference last week. I hope our paths cross again soon. Please keep us in mind for any litigation needs you might have in Ohio.

Very truly yours,

Mr. Nev Ersee Uagain

How many times have you been to a conference, met someone in the buffet line, identified the person as a potential client, exchanged pleasantries and business cards, dutifully followed up—maybe even attempted a few unanswered calls—but nothing ever came of it? It happens to us all. The very reason you went to the conference—to meet new prospects—foiled because you didn't get a chance to develop the conversation long enough to warrant a call back. You can't always prevent this. It's the nature of networking. Not all conversations are going to be homeruns; not all personalities are going to connect. It's a messy process. But you can increase your odds by using a tool I call "Breadcrumbs."

Breadcrumbs are tight, little, mini-value propositions you have tucked away in your pocket when you attend networking functions. They are specifically designed with the follow-up email in mind. Imagine your follow-up email reads something like this:

Dear Jim,

It was a pleasure to meet you at the North American Insulation Industry Conference last week. I really enjoyed hearing about your business. I am attaching a copy of the checklist I described. As we discussed, I think it might help you resolve some of the issues you were having with your importing process. I talked to my partner Hugh Radcliffe about your issue, and he'd be happy to spend a few minutes discussing it with you. Let us know if you are free on Wednesday at 4:00 Eastern to discuss.

Very truly yours,

Mary Baker

The difference is coming prepared with some tools in mind that people in your target audience might find useful in solving a small problem. These tools don't have to solve all your prospects' needs, they just have to be useful for some of them. Think simple practical problem solving tools that show your expertise and, more importantly, make your prospects' lives easier: a checklist, a template, a process, a chart, a spreadsheet, a piece of research on a specific area, a new way of doing something, a new way of dealing with a certain agency or filing something with a court. Come armed to conferences with tools you can discuss and leave behind like breadcrumbs that lead you back into their lives. Breadcrumbs are not trivial. In fact, they are just the opposite. Used correctly, they can turn the conversation from the weather and sports to substantive conversations about real problems your prospects have at work—that's a good thing. The idea is to get invited

back into their world and earn the right to ask more questions and probe for broader needs they might have—needs that you or others at your firm might be able to resolve.

Coming up with breadcrumbs is difficult at first. Some of my clients struggle with it to begin with. But, once you get started, ideas will start to flow. Soon, you'll naturally always have a few breadcrumbs at the ready when you attend networking events.

So, the next time a conversation begins to develop at an event, make sure you are asking questions to uncover needs. Don't make it about you, make it about the person you are talking to. Can you help them with a small problem now that might allow for a broader conversation later? Drop a breadcrumb and see.