

Clubbing in Switzerland

Networking for business success

In Switzerland it helps being a member of one (or several) clubs where personal contacts can improve your career objectives.

Interhuman relations in Switzerland are based largely on various kinds of clubs. The oldest include the Economic Society in Zurich, Berne and Basel, where the economic elite meet up with politicians. Top managers now try to join international clubs or events such as the WEF in Davos, the Bilderberg Conference or similar occasions organized by Forbes, the London Financial Times and the Handelsblatt

of Germany, which today offer such encounters on a professional basis.

It's who you know that counts

At least half of all job vacancies are filled by personal contacts even though they are advertised publicly. In tiny Switzerland, where everyone knows everyone else, hardly anyone has a successful career simply because he is good at his job. It often depends on

who you know and how well you know them.

Relationship management was always important but will increasingly tend to determine in coming years which important business contacts are established. Everybody has the basic ability to engage in good networking. But that ability must be activated correctly.

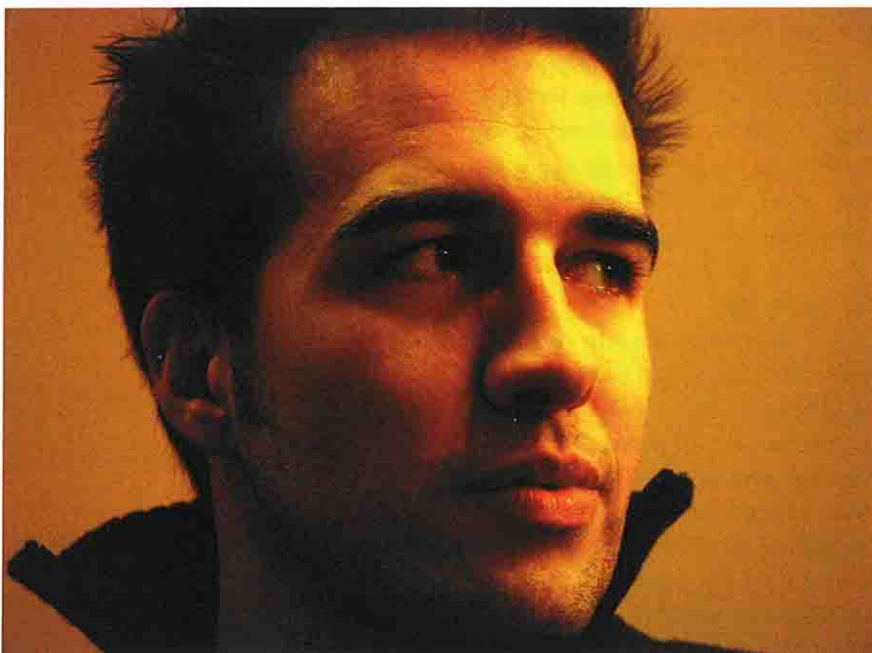
Networking clubs in Switzerland

In Zurich, business managers, board members and politicians have been meeting for the past 20 years at the Zurich Business Club, which invites prominent speakers to the "ZunftHaus zum Safran". Following its success in Zurich, the Business Club has spread its wings to Berne, Basel and the central part of Switzerland, in the cantons of Aargau and Solothurn. »»»»

Fidel S Stöhlker

Professional networker

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- HEALTH
- LIFESTYLE
- FREETIME
- EDUCATION

Then there is the Efficiency Club Zurich, where guests are only invited on the recommendation of members. Duplication of the business activities represented here is not allowed. The risk that the network may in time become a closed circle is very real.

The FBN Family Business Network for the German-speaking part of Switzerland is particularly useful for family-run companies. Here, the proprietors of family businesses meet to exchange their experience. This is a very discreet network that organizes an efficient exchange of views.

Hotel clubs—which exist from Aspen to Singapore—play a special role. They are represented in Zurich by the Baur-au-Lac Club, the Fifa Club and, for the younger and hip set, the Haute Restaurant in central Zurich.

The Kiwanis, Lions, and Rotary remain important, but because of their decentralization run the risk of being sidelined. That is one reason why new clubs are developing in Switzerland.

Making special “contacts”

The Guided Business Club, “contacts., Establishing Common Grounds”—newly founded in January 2005—organizes a monthly event in the Park Hyatt Hotel in Zurich, and is more agile and aggressive than any other in Switzerland. You must become a member but can only do so if you are a CEO or hold a similar management position. Every month, new aspirants flood to the Park Hyatt in Zurich because they want to meet up with other decision-makers.

The special features of the “contacts.” club are these:

√ The first and only guided network in Switzerland; new members are introduced to everyone else; contact-

makers bring interested parties together;

√ contacts. presents prominent entrepreneurs, politicians or top managers, who speak on a topical issue, every month;

√ 11 to 12 events (with meals and drinks) are open to the members;

√ After a time everyone gets to know the hobbies or other private preferences of other members, and this tends to cement personal relations.

Professional networkers – Can everyone become involved?

The simple answer is “No”, not everyone can become a good networker. People must enjoy their networking, without, however, tending to drift off to join the dying generation of golfers or the fun society. Anyone who is timid and cannot be more outward looking has lost the relationship-management game in advance. The clever knitting together of like-minded people must be done intelligently and at the same time be regarded as a fun activity. Beginners can be recognized by the question they often ask: “What’s in this for me?”

The sooner you begin networking, the quicker success follows. Relationships should be established before you need them. People who set about the task when they lose their job are immediately recognizable as losers.

Networking tips

A good relationship manager looks after his contacts continuously or at least as regularly as his professional duties permit. Try to give and not just to take. Build bridges between people and break down prejudices or barriers. If you as a networker have private or business problems, you should preferably avoid attending events. In that situation,

your network should already be established. There is nothing more disagreeable than an embittered networker. Professional networkers are always relaxed and composed. «««

The Do’s and Don’ts

- √ Bad behaviour soon becomes known—you are shunned as an outsider
- √ Relations must not be exploited shamelessly
- √ Avoid American small talk; your discussion partner soon sees whether you are a chatterbox or have a real interest
- √ Never forget your business cards
- √ Read your discussion partners’ business cards carefully and thank the person concerned before putting his card away
- √ Always acknowledge an invitation in writing; for particularly important events, a thank you letter is better than an email
- √ If you have received business cards during the event, write a short thank you note, eg expressing appreciation of the interesting discussion
- √ Never pass on a member list; any serious club would blackball you immediately

* Fidel S Stöhlker, professional networker, is managing partner of Klaus J Stöhlker AG, Zollikon/ZH.