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Online Entrepreneur Networks – Worth Joining?

Posted by admin

Robert Frank's [Journal article today](#) discusses the challenges of new online social networks for the well-to-do in creating online communities for this selective set.

Entrepreneurs, somewhat similarly, have a range of niche online-networking sites seeking their attention. It's easy to see the need. The life of an entrepreneur can be isolating, and entrepreneurs often seek help from peer mentors.



Many sign up for Web sites like [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), or specialized sites like the [International Virtual Women's Chamber of Commerce](#) and [ryze.com](#).

These sites can expand the scope of people whom entrepreneurs can reach for questions and contacts — from around the world and at all times of the day and night.

But can virtual networking offer the kind of support that entrepreneurs need most?

A recent gathering for a group of young entrepreneurs called [Mind Petals](#) in New York City, highlighted the power of in-person collaboration and real-time results. One by one, entrepreneurs stood before the group to present their business ventures.

Among them was 26-year-old Danny Kessler, founder of a women's self-defense organization called [Angels with Attitude](#). Earlier that day, a top mixed martial-arts organization presented Mr. Kessler with a proposition: Bring together 1,000 people for an event and it would partner with him.

Attendees began calling out ideas to fill seats: "Go to a major college campus and get the Greek life involved," "Contact women's roller-hockey leagues," "Get a celebrity involved!"

Immediately, Mr. Kessler's eyes sparkled, his hands fidgeted in excitement. Within minutes, the ad-hoc business team formulated a road map to solve his problem. "The synergy of ideas created in a room of entrepreneurs...is so important to a successful networking group," he says

Mind Petals is just one networking group forming a base of members online, as well as local chapters to meet in person. Mr. Kessler is also a co-founder of [Club E Network](#), a new online social network for entrepreneurs with plans to launch local chapters across the country.

Another group is the [New York Tech Meetup](#), from the popular Web-site [Meetup.com](#) that helps people with shared interests connect to meet in person. Its monthly meetings invite six technology start-ups to make five-minute presentations to between 200 and 700 attendees. The crowd can heckle, ask questions or shout out concerns. The December New York Tech Meetup filled its capacity for attendees weeks in advance.

What do you think? Can virtual networking take the place of traditional in-person support and advice for entrepreneurs? – *Shelly Banjo*

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