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## Diverse crowd gets networking lesson

By MAUREEN MILFORD / The News Journal

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When the Rev. Roy Tripp felt called to be an Episcopal priest, he was working in marketing, sales and public relations in Seattle.

"I honestly believed that what I had learned in business I was leaving behind as I entered into the realm of ordained ministry. I've found just the opposite. Many of the skills I gained in business have proved to be very helpful," said Tripp, 50, rector of St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Brandywine Hundred.

Among the most important skills that were transferred from business to his new vocation are the ability to listen and the knack of putting people at ease, Tripp said. Another is the capacity to network, which means the ability to create and cultivate a broad range of social and professional relationships.

That explained why Tripp was among the 60 people Tuesday who attended what would normally be considered a program for small-business owners - a discussion on networking strategies. Held at the University and Whist Club in Wilmington, the event attracted a diverse group of people, from corporate managers to heads of nonprofit organizations.

Kay Keenan, president of Growth Consulting Inc., a Wilmington-based marketing strategy company, said networking is something everyone should do regardless of their profession or job status.

This applies to people who wouldn't normally consider going to a networking event - executives in large corporations, nonprofit leaders and people in the religious world, she said.

"It makes your life richer and brings different elements and different ways of thinking to whatever you're applying it to," she said.

Keenan was one of the sponsors of the event, along with Steve Smolinsky, head of Benari Ltd., a business development firm in Birchrunville, Pa., and Joel Smith, principal of The People Source Group, a supplemental staffing company in Maple Glen, Pa.

The Wilmington panel discussion was the third event sponsored by Keenan, Smolinsky and Smith. The trio held the breakfasts and discussions last week in Philadelphia and Lafayette Hill, Pa.

Smolinsky told the audience he always has a strategy when he attends an event. Part of that plan includes showing up before everyone else to review the name tags displayed on the table. That way he can decide whom he needs to speak with during the event. He also stays away from people who don't register high on his "fun meter."

"Some people are not good customers. ... They're not worth the aggravation," he told one participant who said he had been brushed off by a potential client.

Smith of People Source said networkers must also be patient and realize that building relationships takes time.

Jeff Walters, a marketing research director with AstraZeneca, said he believes it's important to network with peers and vendors to stay up to date on the latest trends in marketing research. He attended the discussion as a refresher, he said.

"It's a refresher for thinking about how not to let yourself get in a rut of doing a job everyday," Walters said.

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Special to The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON

Growth Consulting's Kay Keenan (right) said everyone should network, regardless of their profession or job status.



Special to The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON

The Rev. Roy Tripp said many of his skills as a businessman, including networking, have helped him in the ministry.

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