

# The Art of Networking *with* Clients *and* Suppliers

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**INNOVEST SME**

Accelerating Small Business

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*Diligence is the  
mother to good luck.*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

# PREFACE

Everyone knows that networking is important to long-term business success. The networking process itself, however, can be confusing. Learning effective networking techniques will help you develop relationships that will benefit you both personally and professionally.

*Networking is an essential  
part of building wealth.*

ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS



# THE BENEFITS OF NETWORKING OUTSIDE OF WORK

The term “networking” is frequently tossed around the business world. It is easy to talk about networking, but implementing it is another matter, particularly when you have to go beyond the confines of the workplace. Fortunately, you will improve your networking skills when you create a solid network and position yourself for success. Networking outside of your company takes time and energy, but the reward is certainly worth the effort.

### CREATE A SOLID NETWORK

Creating a solid network requires you to make connections. It is not enough to simply meet people; you need to meet the right people, people who are likely to develop a professional relationship with you. This requires you to search for connections carefully.

#### **Where to find possible connections:**

- **Referrals:** Ask friends, peers, or family to introduce you to like-minded people. You never know who you might meet.

- **Join groups:** Professional societies offer numerous opportunities to meet new people and make connections.
- **Attend events:** Networking events can be intimidating, but they are essential. You may not make useful connections at every event, but you will not make any connections staying home.

## MEET STRATEGIC ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Strategic alliance partners are made when two companies work together on a joint venture. The partnership may be formal or informal. When two separate businesses begin to work together, however, tension is inevitable. This is why you need to carefully screen potential strategic alliance partners.

This is where networking is indispensable. Since strategic alliance partners need a mutually beneficial working relationship, so you need to get to know your partners ahead of time. You may choose to partner with someone you already know or work with someone new. There are strategic alliance partner networking groups to help you make valuable connections. Like any connection, you need to consider the characteristic that you need in a partnership before you look for one. What strengths do you need to see? Build relationships and make a list of contacts you would be interested in partnering with in the future, and meet with them to assess interest.

## **GENERATE LEADS**

Networking is invaluable when it comes to generating business leads. People are always more comfortable doing business with individuals they know and trust. You can generate leads from networking events as well as from social networking sites. We will go into more detail about the methods later. Networking to generate leads is time consuming, but it is very effective.

When using networking to generate leads, your focus should be on offering value and selling yourself. Meet with different prospects. After meeting individuals who may become leads, follow-up and connect with them. As you build relationships, you will develop new leads.

## **POSITION YOURSELF**

Networking can be used to help you position yourself in your industry. People will contact you once you build a reputation as a reliable expert. Your reputation will develop as people in your network share your strengths as well as the strengths of your company. For example, your network may share an expert article that you write. As the article is shared, you will gain exposure, and your reputation will grow.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Helen is attempting to build a solid network. She goes to every function to meet new people, and she collects business cards from everyone she meets. After three months, her network has not grown as it should, and

she is not sure that the members of her network are very close. Jenny, on the other hand, feels that her network is strong. She only makes connections when she feels that a relationship will be beneficial to both parties. She also relies heavily on referrals to grow her network. After the same three months, Jenny has noticed that it has become easier to generate leads.

*If you find a path with  
no obstacles, it probably  
doesn't lead anywhere.*

FRANK A. CLARK



# NETWORKING OBSTACLES

Like any other endeavor, you will run into obstacles when you network. When you are aware of the common obstacles ahead of time, you are more likely to avoid them or address them correctly. Common obstacles to avoid include time constraints, fear of rejection, networking in the wrong places, and saying the wrong thing.

### TIME CONSTRAINTS

Networking requires the consistent investment of time and energy. The normal time constraints of everyday life can quickly become an obstacle. To avoid this obstacle, it is important that you make networking a priority and schedule for it. The time that you set aside to meet and follow-up with contacts needs to be realistic. You will never attempt to invest the necessary time if your schedule is ridiculous. No one has hours to invest every day. For example, schedule 30 minutes each morning to send emails and make phone calls. Failure to invest the necessary time will damage your relationships as well as your networks.

## SAYING THE WRONG THING

People often say the wrong things in social settings. A misplaced word or phrase can have disastrous effects on your network. The best way to address this obstacle is to speak carefully. Prepare yourself before every meeting. Make a list of topics to avoid and topics that are suitable, and stick to it. While you are in a social setting, mind your manners.

- *Avoid alcohol:* Drinking too much can result in questionable behavior
- *Do not criticize:* Overly critical attitudes will affect you negatively
- *Be courteous:* Treat everyone, even the competition, with courtesy

Unfortunately, miscommunications are inevitable given enough time. If you accidentally say the wrong thing to someone, apologize immediately.

## WHERE TO GO TO NETWORK

People are often confused about where they should network. A common obstacle is limiting network locations. Someone who only networks on social media will lose the opportunity to connect in person. The same is true for only meeting people in person. Another obstacle is networking in the wrong location. While it is important to make sure that you do not limit your networks, you should make sure that you choose networks that relate to you and your goals. For example, joining professional associations that focus on your interests and goals. This will provide you with a useful pool of connections. The same holds true for social media networking.

## **FEAR OF REJECTION**

Encountering rejection is inevitable when you are networking. Sometimes the fear of rejection will become an obstacle. Fear is a stifling emotion, which can lead to the failure to try. It is possible to be controlled by fear and not even know it. A sign of fear is avoidance. People will make excuses to avoid unpleasant tasks. If you find yourself making excuses about networking, consider the motivation behind the excuses.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Tim is Mary's supervisor. He encourages Mary to expand her social network. He gives Mary a list of organizations to join and recommends a few social network groups. A month later, he follows up with her and learns that she has not made any new connections. When he asks her why, she responds that she was too busy to put in much of an effort. He invites her to go to a networking lunch with him the following day and notices that she looks pale. She tells him that she believes she will have to work through lunch the next day. He responds that he is her supervisor, and he is ordering her to come with him. She sighs and tells him not to expect too much.

*Pulling a good network  
together takes effort,  
sincerity and time.*

ALAN COLLINS



# NETWORKING PRINCIPLES

There are four basic networking principles that can help guide you as you expand your personal and professional network. Developing new contacts, organizing contacts, following-up, and building relationships will lead to a stable network of connections on which you can rely.

### DEVELOP CONTACTS

Developing contacts sounds easy, but the first step is often the hardest. At this stage, it is important that you meet people. Meeting people requires the practice of interpersonal skills. When you do meet people, whether in person or online, avoid launching into sales pitch. You sell yourself by meeting their needs, not by talking about yourself incessantly. A contact who is interested in you will provide you with his or her contact information.

#### **Tips to Make Contacts:**

- Listen
- Be polite
- Find common interests

## ORGANIZE YOUR CONTACTS

Collecting contact information alone will not help build your network. If you want to build a strong network, you will need to organize your contacts. This will help you keep better track of them.

### Organization:

- **Central location:** List all of your contacts and their information in a central location. You can use any method you choose: Outlook, phone, address book, spreadsheet, etc.
- **Categorize:** It is important that you categorize your contacts. The way you do it is up to you. For example, you could label customers separately from peers.
- **Make notes:** Once you have categorized your contacts, make notes. For example, you could note the last time that you spoke with the contact along with the topic.

## FOLLOW-UP

Following up with contacts is essential for building a strong network. Follow-up requires you to provide individual attention. Mass emails are not sufficient to establish relationships with contacts and grow a network. It is important that you follow-up with people quickly. A general rule of thumb is to follow-up with new contacts within 24 hours of the first meeting. After this, it is useful to follow-up with contacts at least once a month. If

you fail to follow-up with contacts in a timely manner, they are not likely to remember their earlier conversations with you.

It is important to know when a contact is not interested in becoming part of your network. If a contact does not respond to you after three attempts to follow-up, move on and focus your energy on other people.

## MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

Over time, you will build relationships with your contacts. You need to maintain your relationships with your contacts. If you do not focus on maintenance, your network will slowly fade. There are a few steps that will help you maintain relationships:

- **Communicate regularly:** Connect with contact regularly, even after you consider them part of your network. Call, text, email, or use social network; make an effort to communicate.
- **Individual attention:** This advice is given to help develop contacts, but it is as equally important after a contact is made. Let each contact know that he or she is valued.
- **Limit your network:** It is not possible to give thousands of people individual attention. Limit the size of your network so that you will be able to maintain relationships with everyone.

## PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Jeff decides to follow-up with George after meeting at a Young Professionals function. He sends George an email the next morning, and they meet for

lunch a few weeks later. Jeff feels like the relationship is progressing well. After six months, Jeff becomes focused on expanding his network even further. Jeff goes two months without contacting George. When he finally does contact George, George does not respond at first. When George finally does respond, it is distant. He agrees that they should meet, but he will not commit to a specific date or time. George does not understand why Jeff has lost his enthusiasm for the relationship.

*It's all about people. It's  
about networking and  
being nice to people and  
not burning any bridges.*

MIKE DAVIDSON



# WHY NETWORK

There are various reasons to network. Networking affects your reputation and your social circle. Engaging in networking can result in jobs, partnerships, and support. The benefits include an increase in trust and visibility. Networking can also provide an inside advantage when it comes to your professional and personal life.

## GAIN TRUST

When done correctly, networking helps people gain trust. The more people trust you, the more likely they are to want to do business with you. There are a few steps that anyone can take to gain trust from contacts. These steps are common sense, but their importance cannot be overemphasized.

### Gaining Trust:

- **Be honest:** Trust is easily gained when people have a reputation for being honest and sincere.
- **Act with consistency:** This requires acting with integrity at all times, even when no one is watching.
- **Be helpful:** Remember that it is your goal to meet contacts' needs. Develop a reputation for being helpful.

## BE VISIBLE

Networking can help increase your visibility in the market place, where it doesn't hurt to stand out. Job listings tend to draw piles of applicants, and many of them are qualified. In this competitive atmosphere, it is essential that you stand out from the rest. There are a number of ways to increase visibility. Your circumstances will determine which actions will be effective for you.

### **Increase Visibility:**

- Volunteer
- Speak at events
- Write content
- Share expertise
- Ask questions
- Share news (blog, social media, newsletters, etc.)

## BE AN INSIDER

Networking can help make you an insider. People in your network will be able to guide you to new opportunities. Remember that not every job you want will be advertised. The right connections can provide you with insider opportunities. If a connection feels that you would be perfect for a job, he or she will recommend you. You may be offered it before it is ever

posted. You should expect to do the same for your contacts should the opportunity present itself.

## **GAIN ADVANTAGE**

Networking will help you gain an advantage as your visibility increases. You will be able to stay in the forefront of the decision makers' minds. There are steps to take to ensure that you will have a positive relationship with the decision makers:

- Dress appropriately
- Watch your tone and body language
- Be helpful
- Be engaged (at work and in the community)

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Alex was very pleased with his networking. His visibility was growing in the company, and he was developing a reputation as an expert in his field. He had his sights set on becoming head of the department. He just needed Jeremy's endorsement. Jeremy respected Alex's ability, but he felt that Alex made a poor impression in other ways. Alex always looked sloppy. His clothes were disheveled, and he frequently slouched. Jeremy was not sure that Alex made the impression that would be necessary for a successful department head. Alex was already doing excellent work at his current role, and Jeremy chose to keep him in the same position for a little while longer.

*Network marketing  
is based purely on  
relationship selling,  
which is the state of  
art in selling today.*

BRIAN TRACY



# HOW TO BUILD NETWORKS

It is important to consider the different ways to build networks and engage in the different methods of networking. There is physical networking, which includes networking events. Social networking sites and network referral lists are also beneficial in building strong networks.

## PHYSICAL NETWORKING GROUPS

Never underestimate the importance of physical networking. We are more likely to remember people we meet in person. There are a variety of physical networking groups, and you will be able to choose the ones that you feel are best for you.

### **Common Networking Groups:**

- Community service clubs
- Professional associations
- Business organizations
- Social organizations

Physical network groups are very useful when making new contacts and developing relationships.

## **ATTEND NETWORKING EVENTS**

Physical networking groups will result in the need to attend networking events. It is important to carefully choose the events you attend. Attending too many events will cost you your focus. Once you choose the event, there are some steps that you can take to improve your networking success. First, you need to work the room, do not limit your socialization to people you know. Make sure that you speak to at least one person you do not know.

Be prepared to talk about relevant topics in an educated way. Gauge conversations carefully. If you are not connecting with someone, excuse yourself. Additionally, do not cut a useful conversation short just to meet new people.

## **SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

Love it or hate it, the internet has changed the way that people communicate. Social networking is an essential method of communication. There are a number of different social networks to examine. We will examine the main three sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) later. Other popular social networking tools include:

1. YouTube
2. Pinterest
3. Tumblr
4. Instagram
5. Google+

## **CREATE NETWORKING REFERRAL LISTS**

Once you have established contacts, it is a good idea to consider creating referral lists. This list should be made up of trustworthy people you can benefit from and who can benefit you. The people on the list are typically linked to your area of expertise either directly or indirectly. For example, a lawyer who specializes in your field could be included on the list. When you place people on the referral list, you are willing to refer others to them. This will have an impact on your reputation, so it is essential that you choose people you trust. Before creating a referral list, it is a good idea to consider the type of positions you want to include in your referral network.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Hannah accompanies James to a networking event. James made several contacts at the last event, and Hannah was hoping to do the same. Hannah spent the evening following James. He introduced her to a few people, but she stayed on the periphery of the conversation. A few times, James left to meet new people, but Hannah did not follow him. She was uncomfortable with the situation. By the end of the night, James made two new contacts, Hannah, however, made none.

*Wikis and social  
networking are just tools.*

JIMMY WALES



# ONLINE NETWORKING TOOLS

Various online networking tools are available for your use. Given the number of networking tools available, you are sure to find something that will help you build and maintain your network. Internet tools that are commonly used include: social networks, blogs, chat rooms, and email. Each one of these tools will make your connections in cyberspace easier to monitor.

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are the three networks commonly used in business. Each one has its own strengths.

## FACEBOOK

Although it was originally created for college students, Facebook is now a tool that many business professionals use. The site allows users to upload comments, images, and video. You connect to people on Facebook when you make friend requests that are accepted. Friending people gives you access to their profiles.

## **TWITTER**

Often called a microblog, Twitter provides brief communication. You upload tweets, but they are limited to 140 characters each. You connect to other people by following them, and they can follow you. Most of the communication is public. You can label conversation topics using hashtags.

## **LINKEDIN**

LinkedIn is a professional social network. Like a resume, profiles include areas of expertise and work history. Once you link with professional connections, you can publically endorse them, and they can endorse you.

NOTE: Do not post anything on social media you do not want shared. With each social network, you run the risk of over sharing. If you have any doubt that something is inappropriate, do not post it.

## **BLOGS**

A blog provides a platform that allows you to showcase your expertise and attract contacts. Blogs are useful networking tools because entries can be shared. The comment section also allows you to communicate with connections.

## **Tips to Networking with Blogs:**

- Limit post to topics that you are comfortable with
- Link blog posts to social media and other sites
- Begin a dialogue by commenting on blogs written by other people
- Share your connections' blog posts
- Interview contacts as experts for your blog

## **CHAT ROOMS**

Chat rooms require more direct interactions than most social networks do. Many chat rooms are online meeting places where people discuss different topics. They are helpful for making contacts because most of the people you meet in chat rooms will share your interests. There are numerous chat rooms available to join. You simply need choose one that has a topic you are interested in and find a conversation thread that looks promising. You should ask your peers and contacts if they frequent any chat rooms. Remember that people behave better in some chat rooms than others. If you find a chat room where people do not communicate respectfully, leave it and find one where people are better behaved.

## **EMAIL**

Email is a familiar networking tool. Probably the tool that is most often used, email is useful for both personal and professional use. Email is beneficial because it allows you to maintain contact with the people in

your network without invading their privacy. There are a few tips you need to remember when using email:

- Have a clear topic, and include it in the subject line
- Send individualized emails, when possible
- Be brief (keep emails around 150 words)
- Be helpful (don't simply ask for things)

While emails are effective, they should not be your only method of communication. It is necessary to connect with people in different ways.

### **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Kathy is connected to Fran on a social network. Kathy liked Fran, but some of Fran's posts made her uncomfortable. Fran tended to share personal information. Every change in mood was listed. She also discussed her conflicts with other people on the network. Kathy felt uncomfortable posting online because Fran always found a way to turn it into something negative. Kathy was torn. She enjoyed Fran's company in person, but the Fran online was terribly negative. Kathy considered unfriending Fran, but she was afraid of how it would affect their relationship.

*Everyone has an  
invisible sign hanging from  
their neck saying, 'Make  
me feel important'.*

MARY KAY ASH



# DEVELOP INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Interpersonal relationships will develop overtime, since networking is intertwined with relationship building. Building new relationships requires a great deal of effort, but the payoff is worth the energy. Developing interpersonal relationships requires deliberate action, integrity, and boundaries, all which take time to implement.

## BE SPECIFIC

Interpersonal relationships require acting with specificity. Many are prejudiced against networking because they feel that it lacks sincerity; no one likes to feel like a number. Choose to build relationships with specific contacts and be genuine in your interactions. It is best to build relationships on common interests and passions. If you choose to build friendships with specific people you enjoy interacting with, the relationship will develop naturally.

When you meet new contacts, be prepared to discuss your interests and passions. This will help you identify like-minded people and build strong relationships.

## KEEP YOUR WORD

People are unlikely to build relationships with individuals they do not trust. It is imperative that you do everything that you can to ensure that your prospects see you as trustworthy. In order to do this, you must always keep your word. This may sound simplistic, but its importance cannot be overstated. It is necessary to take extra precautions to make certain that you are able to keep your word.

- **Do not over commit:** Something will be left undone if this happens.
- **Manage your time carefully:** Consistently being late gives the impression that you do not pay attention to promises.
- **Make reasonable promises:** Do not make promises you cannot keep.

## MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES

Every relationship needs boundaries; this is also true of networking relationships. For relationships to be successful, you need to establish your own boundaries and also respect the boundaries that other people have created. If you fail to establish boundaries, you will find that people will become intrusive. You need to create personal boundaries that fit your individual needs. These are steps anyone can take to help establish and keep personal boundaries.

- Put time in your schedule for yourself and protect it

- Communicate your boundaries to others
- Learn to say no, when necessary
- Prepare a response for anyone who violates your boundaries

## **INVEST TIME**

All relationships demand that you invest your time. Given the busy schedule that most people have, taking the time to reach out to individuals, is often overlooked. It is not enough to simply run into people at events, you need to set aside time to reach out to the individuals with whom you want to build relationships. To make sure that you take the time that is necessary, schedule it. Take time to make calls, send emails, and meet with your contacts. You do not have to carve out large chunks of time, and it does not have to be a daily endeavor. Simply make the effort.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Candace is a new contact of Ben's. Three months after their meeting, however, Candace is not sure that being connected to Ben is a good idea. She has provided guidance and resources to him on multiple occasions. Ben promises to help her, but he never seems to be able to make it happen. Every time that they schedule a meeting, he cancels or arrives late. One time, he promised to bring some documents with him, but he forgot them. Candace is beginning to feel like the relationship is very one-sided.

*Do not fear mistakes.  
You will know failure.  
Continue to reach out.*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



# COMMON NETWORKING MISTAKES

If you are aware of the common networking mistakes, you will have a better chance of avoiding them. Common mistakes include taking before giving, making assumptions, reaching too high, and assuming that tools alone will build connections. Always monitor your interactions with others to prevent making these all too common errors.

### TAKING BEFORE GIVING

As we have already established, you need to offer value in new relationships. Give other people a reason to pursue a relationship with you. Prove that you are an asset. You should try giving before taking. When you take before giving, you appear selfish.

Giving does not have to be a grand gesture. You can offer something simple. For example, provide a referral for a service or provide expert advice. The important thing to remember is that you need to give before you take.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

Making assumptions is not advised when making new contacts. Assumptions are often wrong, particularly in the early phases of the relationship. A common assumption is that people should automatically care about your needs and make an effort to help you. If you make this assumption, you are likely to face disappointment and also strain your relationship with your contacts. You may ask your contacts for help, and they may or may not choose to help you. If you place expectations on people, however, you will only serve to make them uncomfortable and alienate them.

## **REACHING TOO HIGH**

Another common goal is reaching too high. Basically, this is making unachievable goals. While it is a good idea to have networking goals, they need to be realistic. There are two ways people typically reach too high when networking. One goal is trying to expand the network too quickly. The other mistake is attempting to network with people at the top of the profession too soon. Networking is long-term, and it requires realistic goals. For example, collecting the information of five contacts at an event is less likely than collecting the information of two contacts. Additionally, you are unlikely to connect with the CEO of a Fortune 500 when you first begin. Reaching too high will damage your networking effort. If you are not able to achieve a goal, you are unlikely to continue making an effort.

## **ASSUME TOOLS CREATE CONNECTIONS**

Knowing what networking tools can improve your networking skills. A mistake is made, however, when too much faith is placed in the tools. The tools themselves do not guarantee anything. The effect that tools have on networking is directly related to the skill and effort of the individual using them. For example, a blog is an online tool, but it will not generate any new contacts if it is poorly written or rarely updated. Additionally, tools are no substitute for connecting with individuals in person. Tools are useful, but they are only as effective as the individual using them.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Leonard was certain that building a network would benefit him greatly. Margery was the HR manager for another company, and Leonard hoped that she would recommend him for a job. Margery liked Leonard, but she did not know him well enough to consider recommending him for a job. The thought never crossed her mind. She soon noticed that Leonard seemed annoyed with her. When she confronted him, he replied that he had assumed she would have come through for him by now. Once Margery understood that Leonard wanted a job at her company, she became very uncomfortable and limited her contact with him.

*A man who dares  
waste one hour of his time  
has not yet discovered the  
value of life.*

CHARLES DARWIN



# TIME MANAGEMENT

Because time is such an obstacle to networking, time management needs to be addressed. Time management for networking can be improved by prioritizing contacts and scheduling activities. Connecting with people online and organizing activities for groups will also help you manage your time as you develop relationships within your network.

## PRIORITIZE CONTACTS

Prioritizing contacts will help you focus your attention on people who are likely to become close contacts. You must remember that not every contact will have the same level of interest in the relationship. This is why prioritizing contacts is necessary. There are four steps to helping prioritize your contacts.

- Make a list of contacts
- Note people interested in connecting with you
- Note people who have useful connections
- Note people who have useful knowledge

The people who meet these criteria are your priority contacts. Arrange your list beginning with highest priority contacts, and work your way down.

## CREATE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Group activities are effective for network management. By meeting with the members of your network in a group setting, you will find it easier to keep in touch with different contacts. It also allows the members of your network to meet and expand their relationships with each other. Your group activities should be informal and enjoyable. You do not have to spend a great deal of money on a group activity, but they should reflect the tastes of your contacts. Common activities include:

- Movies
- Dining
- Bowling
- Sports games

## CONNECT ONLINE

Networking requires people to connect online. Many of these online tools should be familiar since we have already covered them. You must, however, use these tools regularly. It is not enough to simply join social networks and start a blog. You must update regularly to maintain the interest of your connections, and it is equally important that you comment on other social networking sites and blogs to establish dialogue.

You should schedule time to connect online each day. You do not have to use all tools daily. Divide the bulk of your time between the tools that are most important and will reach the maximum number of people. For

example, you may want to blog once a week, email daily, and update other social media several times a week.

## **SCHEDULE YOUR NETWORK ACTIVITIES**

You need to schedule your networking activities, or you will forget about them. Individual schedules will vary. A good rule of thumb is to make out a schedule at least a week in advance. Then you make adjustments to your schedule at the end of each day. When making a schedule, it is important to include time for online networks, group activities, and private meetings. You need to remember that your weekly schedule is not set in stone. It may be altered, but creating it helps you make networking a priority for you, making it less likely that you will neglect your networking activities.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Grant joined several networks online, but this action did nothing to help him grow his network. Grant decided to consult Linda since she had more experience using social media. Linda asked Grant how often he logged into social media. Grant told her that he set aside Friday afternoons for social media. Linda explained that Grant was not engaging his followers with such infrequent interaction. She advised him to spend a few minutes every day on two of the networking sites. The others could be visited twice a week. After two months, Grant noticed an increased dialogue in social media.

*When you stop  
expecting people to be  
perfect, you can like them  
for who they are.*

DONALD MILLER



# MANAGE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

As you create your personal and professional networks, you will have the responsibility of managing them. Your networks will thrive as long as you remember to be responsive and give back while you stay in-touch with your contacts. It is also beneficial to separate your personal activities from your business ones. As you learn to manage your networks, you will reap the rewards.

### BE RESPONSIVE

You must be responsive in your professional and personal relationships. Do not ignore people; always respond in a timely manner. Ignoring requests for career help gives the impression that you are not invested in the individual asking you for help. If you do not have the time to fully address an issue, schedule a meeting for a better time. The most important thing you can do is respond to requests from your network.

## **GIVE BACK**

Part of networking is giving back. When people ask for your help, find a way to give it. There are many ways you can give back to the people in your network.

Example:

- Provide advice
- Offer career help
- Share expertise
- Reference people in a blog post
- Provide a recommendation

## **SEPARATE PERSONAL AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES**

Establishing boundaries between personal and business life is important. Separating personal and business activities will reinforce these boundaries. For example, use one social networking site for personal use and another for business. Some people have a personal and a professional Facebook site, while others only use LinkedIn for professional use and Facebook for personal. There are also privacy settings that limit what people see on your sites. You will have to determine the best method for separating your personal and business activities. Once you discover the method that works for you, stick with it.

## **STAY PHYSICALLY IN-TOUCH**

We have already addressed the importance of staying connected. This requires staying physically in-touch whenever possible. This is easier to do when people are local. However, it is still important to make connections with people who are not local. This requires a little more effort. When you travel, you should make the time to reach out to people you know. Even if visits are infrequent, people will appreciate the attempt to reach out to them.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Robert emailed Diane to ask for a recommendation before his job interview the next week. Diane did not reply before the interview. Robert was confident at his interview, and he was certain that he made a good impression. He was nervous, however, because he had given Diane as a reference, and she never acknowledged his request. He decided to call her three days later, and she informed him that she had already provided the employer with a recommendation. Robert was relieved, but he was still annoyed with Diane for not responding to him.

*Will the social networking  
phenomenon lessen?  
I don't think so.*

MARISSA MAYER

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

- **Dale Carnegie:** You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.
- **Maya Angelou:** I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
- **Matt Gentil:** Understand your audience and you will understand the impact of your message on each follower in your social media networks.
- **Deepak Chopra:** Giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging.



**Rick Chisholm** made history when he single-handedly changed the professional Audio Visual industry by breaking all the rules and capitalised over 50% market share in Australia with very little capital, no partners, mergers or lenders and set up the first franchise operation of its kind in the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

As a 7x founder of companies and 30x businesses such as Innovest, AI Machine, Lightsounds, LSW, Light Emotion with revenue in excess of \$300 million and having employed more than 1,000 staff over the last 35 years. Rick is known as the Start-Up and SME Guru and is Author of a number of books including Business Success for Life. Unlike many mentors, he actually walks the talk and has a number of businesses under management in such areas as Automation, Events management, Importing, Distribution, Retailing and E-commerce.

His BIG passion is Business Education empowering Businesses Owners through knowledge and skills. Whilst Rick has experienced great success, he has also endured many failures. Rick has faced and overcome the exact same challenges you are facing now.



**Tala Chisholm** is an SME specialist who has owned and managed several small to medium sized businesses in the last 20 years, several of which were eventually sold. She has extensive experience in the fields of retail, franchising, licensing, dealerships, education, importing, distribution and consulting.

Her expertise lies in building and implementing customised cross-platform database and software solutions for businesses, automation, IT, web marketing, advertising, graphic design, business administration, process refinement and implementation. Her business experience ranges from bricks-and-mortar Giftware retailing to highly technical fields such as Security, CCTV, Entertainment Lighting and Audio sales, hire and installations as well as e-commerce.

Throughout her career she also trained and mentored Franchise business owners as well as internal division managers. Some areas of training included retail operations, management practices, business strategy, accounting, cash-flow, marketing, customer service and IT. She has also headed up the drafting of Operating Compliance Manuals for Franchise operations and implementation of all the elements involved.

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