



IT'S WHO KNOW YOU



...and What You Can Do for Them

by Beth Douglass Silcox

Building lasting professional relationships requires more than exchanging business cards.

Networking isn't a meeting you attend once a month or a speed-dating event, complete with bells ringing you on to the next pitch. It's not an after-hours cocktail party, and it sure doesn't end with passing out business cards.

Networking is a mindset. It's a philosophy, a lifestyle and a discipline. It's a conscious choice to genuinely connect with the people behind the companies and titles so elegantly embossed on their business cards. And people who are most adept at networking realize motive makes all the difference in connecting or not.

The importance of winning friends and influencing people is not a new concept. Dale Carnegie's classic book, a must-read for networking, helped lift people out of the Depression and continues to offer valuable wisdom today.

Still, you've met people who don't get it: The Schmooser, The Gossip, The Name Dropper. They're at every First Friday event across the country, strong-arming you to buy whatever they're selling, give them a job or offer them sales leads. Their efforts are short-sighted.

"If you're entering a relationship and networking just for personal gain, personal interests and personal goals, then you're going to enter into very shallow, very self-serving relationships, and that's not going to get you anywhere," says Tommy Spaulding, former CEO of Up With People and author of *It's Not Just Who You Know*.

When you meet someone new, flip the typical, "What can you do for me?" thought process on its ear. Ask, instead, "What can I learn from this person and how can I help them?" That, by Spaulding's definition, is *netgiving*, a pay-it-forward concept that's gaining ground. "Netgiving is all about entering relationships with a 'servant' mentality versus a 'to-be-served' mentality."

Calculated and manipulative relationships aren't genuine and won't work long term to build your sales, your credibility or your résumé. On the other hand, Spaulding says, "Every relationship I've entered and built on serving them, I've gotten back tenfold."

Of course, you can't serve everyone. You will wear yourself out. Focus on those with whom you have an authentic connection.

Find them by choosing your networking opportunities carefully and daring to break out of the proverbial networking box.

Given the choice to attend a typical after-hours networking event or a Big Brothers, Big Sisters training workshop with 100 other young executives, Spaulding votes Big Brothers every time. "Ever build a house for Habitat for Humanity with a bunch of jerks? It just doesn't happen," he says. Quality people equal quality relationships. Look for like-minded people involved in like-minded activities. That's where you should network.

Reaching Out

"You have to have a knack for doing things a bit differently if you want to have different results," says Eddie Armstrong, whose own story is a testament to the power of networking, as well as his own persistence.

An at-risk, Arkansas kid from a loving single-parent household, Armstrong learned debate skills at the local Boys & Girls Club that ultimately led to his winning the organization's prestigious national competition and a scholarship. Along the way, he brushed elbows with a Who's Who of business and government leaders.

The business cards he brought home weren't simply mementos to be thrown in a dresser drawer, and he knew it. These were people he could learn from, people he wanted to know better. So the teen reached out. "I got in the habit of writing unique letters and personalized notes," Armstrong says. "Over time, it became a way of life."

Putting himself out there made a big difference. "Every professional relationship from Tyson Foods to Boys & Girls Clubs of America, they all spun out of my creating the relationship with them in the first place. If they knew nothing else about me, they knew that I had reached out,"



says Armstrong, who landed government-liaison jobs with Boys & Girls Clubs of America and later with Tyson Foods as one of its youngest executives. He's now a consultant specializing in government relations, diversity relations and community affairs, and heads a foundation providing scholarships to minority students from single-parent homes. Armstrong counts as his closest mentors those relationships he cultivated as a teenager.

Of course, Armstrong started from scratch. He hadn't yet graduated high school. But adults delving into networking come pre-loaded with existing relationships. Bob Beaudine, an executive recruiter and author of *The Power of Who: You Already Know Everyone You Need to Know*, puts it this way: "You could be standing in the midst of your own diamond stream and not see it."

Beaudine's 100/40 strategy re-centers networking around your closest friends. "It's a false notion to think that your success will come from a bunch of people you don't know," he writes. So, get off the "Lone Ranger treadmill" and ask for a little help from your friends and their friends.

As he explains it, there are roughly 100 people within your spheres of influence, each circle of friends marked with varying degrees of relationship strength. Heart connections—maybe 12 people—live at the center. Radiating outward are "Who" friends, allies, advocates, acquaintances and fans.

Building Transformational Relationships

The trick here is to "go deep" with friendships—not wide. That means spending more time building transformational, not transactional, relationships. Cultivate your "Who" friends and increase their numbers. "When 'Who' friends open up their world to you and invite you in, you have now been given access to a whole new group of quality people, each of whom have their own 'Who' world," Beaudine says. "Those overlapping circles are the 'Power of Who.' It's a whole different world than mere networking."

On a personal level, all you have to do is join LinkedIn, the online professional networking site, to understand how your friends' connections might impact you and how yours could impact them.

Tony Jeary, coach to some of the world's top CEOs and author of *Strategic Acceleration: Succeed at the Speed of Life*, built a career by helping people connect. He's opened doors that were otherwise closed. He's made phone calls and introductions, linked some of the world's highest achievers, and you can bet if you've ever given him your business card, he still has it or, at least, a copy of it!

"I believe you become much more valuable to the world if you can help link and connect people. But where so many people miss out is in their willingness to do favors for people up front," Jeary says.

The Law of CONNECTIONS

It's not only who you know;
it's how you connect them.

by HEIDI KRUPP



The most valuable tools when building and growing a business—and your greatest assets—are the relationships you've built over the years. Just as important as *who* you know is *how* you connect these people with one another.

In today's fast-paced, high-tech world of Twitter, Facebook, FourSquare and Google, everyone has access to your connections. It's easy to find out who your friends are, who you are following and who follows you, and to try to be part of your network by friending your friends.

The good news is that your most valued acquaintances won't just connect with anyone; no one can compete with the quality of the relationships you have built. The law of connections, as I view it, mandates that connections be built on trust, loyalty and discretion, and sealed in faith that none of the parties will do or say anything to compromise the relationship.

It's important to guard that trust you've established, and to connect only like-minded, respectful folks. The goal is to make sure they know that, in connecting them, you believe the introductions are of great value to everyone concerned, and that they also will abide by your law of connections.

It's essential that you know the parties well before you consider connecting them. Making meaningful connections will add value not only to the parties you've introduced, but also to your bottom line. Remember, that by vouching for them, you're putting your credibility and reputation on the line.

I learned this lesson years ago; I've never forgotten it. Let me share how it happened. Working as a volunteer for a televised celebrity award production, I met someone I believed to be a good person who seemed qualified for the industry. After learning this person needed work, and because of my good-hearted nature and trust, I wanted to facilitate introductions with potential employers.

What I didn't realize then was how strong my word was. This person got the job based on my recommendation; the employer figured that if I was making the introduction, this person must share my work ethic and dependability, and that I would remain involved in some capacity. But things didn't work out that way.

Fast-forward to missed deadlines, skipped meetings, budget overruns. This person's poor performance jeopardized the job and my valued connection with the employer. So the solution for me was simple. I had to jump in, learn and support wherever I could. Fortunately all worked out well in the end, but it cost us a great deal of time, money and resources.

While you cannot control every aspect of your relationships, you can control the way you connect, network and make introductions. Not all connections are created equal, and they must be shared carefully and thoughtfully, with many parameters and check points in place to make sure your law of connections remains pure.

A veteran of media, marketing, promotion and production in the entertainment industry, Heidi Krupp is founder and CEO of Krupp Communications (K2), an award-winning full-service public relations, branding and marketing agency.

For decades, Jeary has jotted notes on business cards and diligently returned them to his office for copying. He has binder after binder after binder of copied business cards, front and back, organized week by week, year after year after year. If you met Jeary around Halloween 2004, he'll find your card and know what you talked about.



connecting two CEOs from different industries to brainstorm marketing strategies. Either way, Jeary brings value to the relationship without expectation.

“Part of who you are and how people see you has to do with the people you know. If you can bring that to the table for people, then your personal brand is greatly enhanced. Whether you’re looking for a job now or later down the road

Roadmap to Success

Of course, he also uses an extensive database and plugs people into his cell phone, but the methods, discipline and mindset that make Jeary a successful networker can be had for a \$3 binder, some copy paper and the willingness to give something of value to another person without asking anything in return.

Jeary and his staff continually look for ways to reach out to the people he’s met and give them something of value. It could be as simple as forwarding an interesting website link or as complex as

or looking for investors or partners, people are attracted to people who can really help them,” Jeary says.

Whether we realize it or not, networking is part and parcel of everyone’s life. Our concentric circles of relationships from business, the ball field, church and school impact our lives. What we choose to do with them is up to us.

As Eddie Armstrong sees it, “The new road map to success is built on relationships. If you pay it forward and give more than you’re asked, you’re destined for great things.” **S**

An advertisement for Dr. Nathaniel J. Williams' 'The Absolutes of Success Series'. The top half features a stack of books with the title 'The Absolutes of Success Series Worksheets and Illustrations' and the subtitle 'Maximizing Your Greatest Potential To'. To the right, a yellow box contains text about professional presentations and motivational speeches. Below the books is a photo of Dr. Williams, a man in a suit. The bottom half has a red background with the text 'INNOVATIVE. THOUGHT PROVOKING. LIFE CHANGING.' and 'DISCOVER your successful self through the wonderful series of books available by success expert Dr. Nathaniel J. Williams.' A white box contains the website 'VISIT WWW.DRNATWILLIAMS.COM'. At the very bottom, a dark grey bar contains contact information: '1655 VALLEY CENTER PARKWAY | BETHLEHEM, PA. 18017 | (484)-893-5078 | NWILLIAMS@DRNATWILLIAMS.COM'.

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