



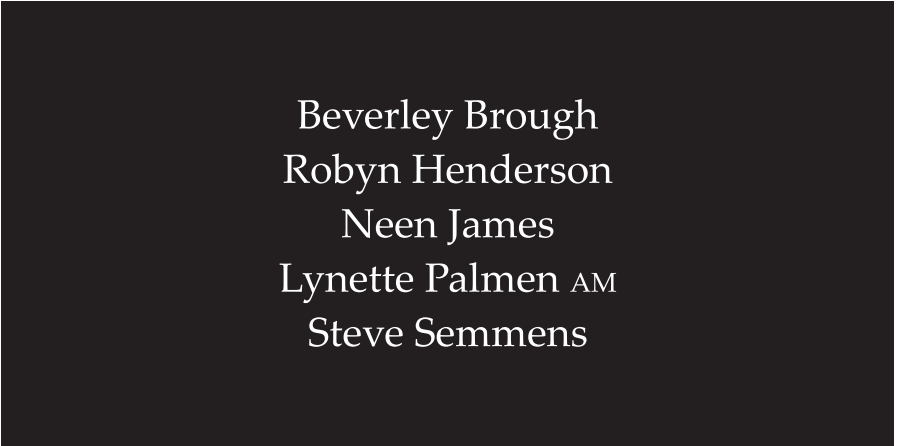
# STRATEGIC NETWORKING

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- your guide to  
networking excellence

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Beverley Brough  
Robyn Henderson  
Neen James  
Lynette Palmen AM  
Steve Semmens



# Strategic Networking

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First published in 2007  
by Sea Change Publishing

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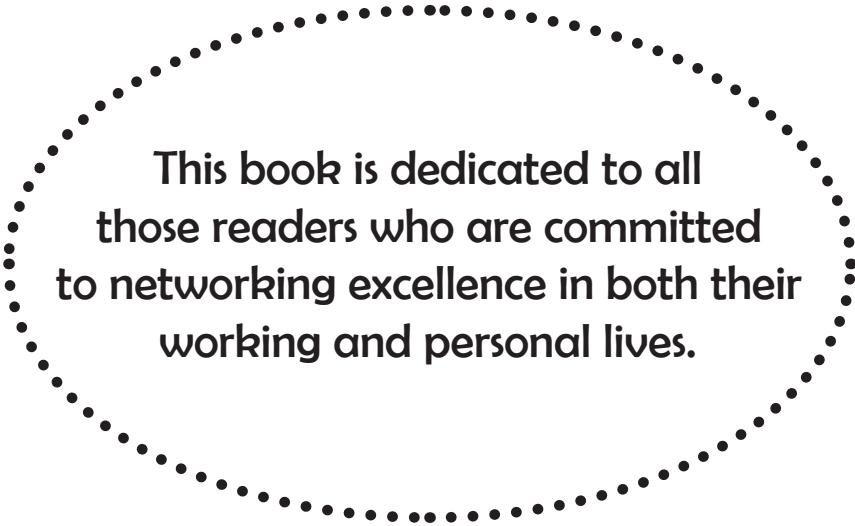
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**This book is dedicated to all  
those readers who are committed  
to networking excellence in both their  
working and personal lives.**

*People will always be drawn to those who have a genuine interest in helping them achieve success. The secret is that you have to be authentic and believe in what you are doing. Networking is not a business practice, it's a lifestyle choice.*

*Lynette Palmen, AM*

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## **Is Your Networking Strategic?**

Do you strive for networking excellence, or is networking an activity you only do sometimes? This book will give you reasons, benefits and systems to enable you to understand that networking is a life skill, not just something you do when you want something. It will show you how to improve your networking results from ordinary to extraordinary.

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced networker, this book provides clear tips and tactics for career building, business development and forging personal connections

PLUS:

- Forensic networking – what it is, and how and why it works
- Understanding cultural differences when you network
- How to escape your career rut and network your way to your next promotion or career move
- How to network via a virtual trade mission
- How to build a direct marketing business through networking
- Creating and developing relationships
- How to set up a network in a new area from scratch
- Keys to forming successful informal strategic alliances

## Strategic Networking

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- How to work with like-minded people and avoid the ones you don't like
- How to network your way to your next board appointment

Contributing authors Robyn Henderson, Neen James, Steve Semmens, Beverley Brough and Lynette Palmen are master networkers who outline their systems and approaches for taking your networking to the next level.

After reading this book, you will have all the tools you need to network your way to success – anywhere.

Get the networking edge today.

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# What is Networking?

## Chapter One

### **What Is Networking?**

For more than fifteen years, in my corporate presentations and my books, I have been defining networking as a life skill – something that you live, rather than something that you do. Networking is a way of life, a way of thinking, and is based on a belief that is founded on three universal laws that I strive to live by, and encourage others to live by as well.

The three universal laws on which networking is based are:

#### **The Law Of Reciprocity**

What you give out comes back ten-fold. Whether you give out referrals, information, love, or ideas, whatever you give out will always come back – many times over. However, the referrals will not always come back from the person who received your referrals in the first place.

#### **The Law Of Abundance**

There are plenty of opportunities for everyone. Now, more than ever before, in our borderless society and global marketplace, someone in a small country town can supply goods or services to customers anywhere in the world. Sometimes, however, it's hard to think abundantly when we are surrounded by negativity, whereby people adopt a scarcity mentality, believing there are not enough opportunities to go around.

## **The Law Of Giving Without Expectations**

Give without remembering, and receive without forgetting. This means readily providing ideas, information, contacts and referrals because you want to help other people to achieve their goals, without keeping score of favours or assistance provided. This is about giving simply because you can – no strings attached.

Over the years, I have been intrigued by the various ways in which different cultures interpret the concept of networking. To me, there always seemed to be a strong element of helping others, and sharing information. I recently spoke at a Global Women's Summit in Glasgow, Scotland, and while I was there, I questioned a variety of women from the UK, Europe and Nigeria about their experiences with networking. Their responses were very interesting:

- Deborah Pyner ([www.dietfreedom.co.uk](http://www.dietfreedom.co.uk)) from England described networking as a chance to meet people, learn about things, swap ideas, stories and contacts and potentially create mutually beneficial opportunities.
  
- Uloma Ike (Access Bank, Lagos, Nigeria) spoke of interacting with people, and receiving lots of business referrals from people whom she had met on an informal basis.

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- Joyce Duncan ([www.enetrust.com](http://www.enetrust.com)) from Scotland shared that for her, it was about meeting new people and widening her knowledge of what was going on in the world. Inevitably, there was a connection somewhere – it's a small world now.
  
- Fiona Gifford ([www.fionagifford.co.uk](http://www.fionagifford.co.uk)), also from England, defined it as building relationships with a broad diversity of interesting people: both those with whom she shared ideas, values and principles, and those who challenged her and made her question herself. Initially, these relationships may be nothing more than mutually rewarding casual friendships, but some grow into business relationships, some generate referrals (either one way or in both directions), some lead to introductions to other interesting people, and some become close friends.
  
- Fiona MacPhee ([www.mazurs.co.uk](http://www.mazurs.co.uk)), another Scottish delegate, described networking as building up a database of contacts and then maintaining the database by regularly writing to or emailing individuals, bearing in mind that it's about giving as well as taking when it comes to doing business.
  
- Erica van Ooyen ([www.centerforsustainabletalent.com](http://www.centerforsustainabletalent.com)) from the Netherlands said that networking was about connecting with someone to see if you could find common ground and create win-win situations. Erica also shared one of her favourite networking tips, which was to see whether she could provide whoever she met

with someone or something that might help them further along their desired path.

I was also curious as to what suggestions they would offer for people wanting to work in their respective countries, as I have often missed opportunities or offended people culturally without even realising what I had done. I trust you will find these responses useful, however they are by no means an overview of international networking. When you do decide on the country where you intend to network or create opportunities, research the local trade and commerce associations as much as possible. The more prepared you are, the greater your chances of a positive outcome.

These responses provide a small selection of cultural tips, and hopefully show the importance of doing your homework prior to attempting to network and form strategic alliances in another country:

- Fiona MacPhee ([www.mazars.co.uk](http://www.mazars.co.uk)) lamented that visitors to Scotland often talk to the locals as though they're English. "*We're very proud of being Scottish, even though we have British passports.*"
- Michelle Brailsford ([www.jupiterconsultinggroup.com](http://www.jupiterconsultinggroup.com)), sharing her experiences as an American living in Great Britain, said that she found it hard to get to know the British on a personal level. "*They are very private, so it takes longer to build the relationship, but like people anywhere in the world, once you connect, you connect! And then great things can happen.*"

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Michelle also shared a great example of the power of networking. *“When I was preparing to move to England six years ago, I put the word out to my US-based network asking for any contacts at all in London. I didn’t expect much response though, because I didn’t know anyone in England or Europe, so why would my friends and colleagues, but the number and quality of contacts that they were able to provide overwhelmed me. One in particular was a friend of my colleague’s sister – they had worked together briefly – and I was put in touch. Just weeks after landing, she and her husband took me out to dinner, and we became friends. My first friend in England, and all because I reached out to my network in the States! As a postscript, we are still friends today.”*

- Andrew Shadrake ([www.shadrake.com](http://www.shadrake.com)) suggested that we needed to listen a lot, and try to find a fit between what we were doing and what interested them. And we needed to smile.
- Marina Joseph ([www.rbs.co.uk](http://www.rbs.co.uk)) suggested that people involved in any potential alliance should provide some background on their cultural behaviours and expectations, outlining a quick overview of their country’s general culture, and also offering some tips on stakeholder management to minimise the chances of committing a cultural faux pas.
- Deborah Pyner ([www.dietfreedom.co.uk](http://www.dietfreedom.co.uk)) shared her observation that, “Hmm – the Brits are a funny lot, but while they can appear a bit aloof, they are generally

open to the same flatteries as the rest of us. Let's face it – if you find yourself in a room full of strangers, most folk are quite pleased not to be left standing on their own! If you make the effort to introduce yourself and ask a few open ended questions, you'll soon discover their passions and have them chatting away. True, you will meet the occasional plank, but aren't they everywhere?"

Deborah also shared a wonderful networking story. *"My old colleague and I put networking to the real test when we set up a 'commercial fundraising zone' for a London hospital and research institute that was a renowned 'centre of excellence' for heart and lung treatment. This was in the early '90s, when charity was pretty much still 'good works'. We set out to use networking to raise funds by putting people together to create an 'enterprise zone' that encouraged business deals – not only for the hospital, but also among the business people we had gathered at each event. It worked brilliantly, and spun off big fundraising deals for the hospital, a lot of 'goodwill' donations, and introductions to other brilliant people who in turn became involved. It spawned a network of friends and business buddies, some of whom I still work with and am friends with today. In fact, our need to build goodwill within the hospital, where staff were suspicious of this 'new fundraising', led us to set up a consultancy board of influencers from all levels within the hospital. Unbeknownst to either of us, it transpired that my future mother-in-law was on that board!"*

## Strategic Networking

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- Interestingly, Uloma Ike from Nigeria provided an insight into her culture when she suggested that we should always be polite and respectful, and never refer to people older than ourselves by their first names!
- Fiona Gifford ([www.fionagifford.co.uk](http://www.fionagifford.co.uk)) suggested that it was important to feel comfortable being naïve. *“Ask your hosts about what is expected, and what is the norm – people love to be your guide, and will respect your sensitivity and humility.”*

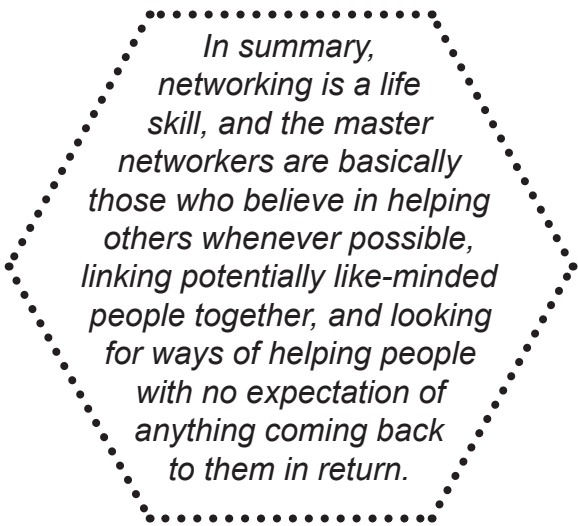
Fiona also shared a great networking story. *“I once attended a very highbrow event where the guests were mainly academics. They were all standing around in groups talking about their respective subjects, and were not very open to an ‘outsider’. I had nothing at all in common with these people, and was finding it very difficult to get involved. I saw a man standing alone by the window, so I approached him and got chatting. He turned out to be the guest speaker, a very eminent academic and writer (although I had never heard of him!). He had arrived unnoticed. We had a great conversation, and when the formal proceedings began and he made his speech, he mentioned our discussion, and how important it was for academics to share and discuss their subject with others, as I had asked him questions he had never considered before!”*

- Elaine Duff, Manager, Women in Business Bank of Scotland Corporate, suggested that in Scotland, a sense of humour (particularly self-deprecating) goes a long way. *“In my experience, Scottish people will warm*



*to you if you're not afraid to laugh at yourself. More generally, in Britain, be prepared to follow through on any 'small talk' questions you ask by actually listening to the answer. I've lost count of the number of times I've been half way through answering the question "How are you?" when I've realised that the person who asked the question has already moved on, and wasn't really expecting an answer. What I thought was a question was actually more a form of greeting."*

- Finally, Erica van Ooyen advised that in the Netherlands, it is necessary to take everything one step at a time, as women in particular are not used to networking yet. She also mentioned that they can sometimes be overprotective in terms of their own knowledge, existing networks, etc. They need time to build trust, and to understand that sharing is really about win-win.



*In summary,  
networking is a life  
skill, and the master  
networkers are basically  
those who believe in helping  
others whenever possible,  
linking potentially like-minded  
people together, and looking  
for ways of helping people  
with no expectation of  
anything coming back  
to them in return.*

## Strategic Networking

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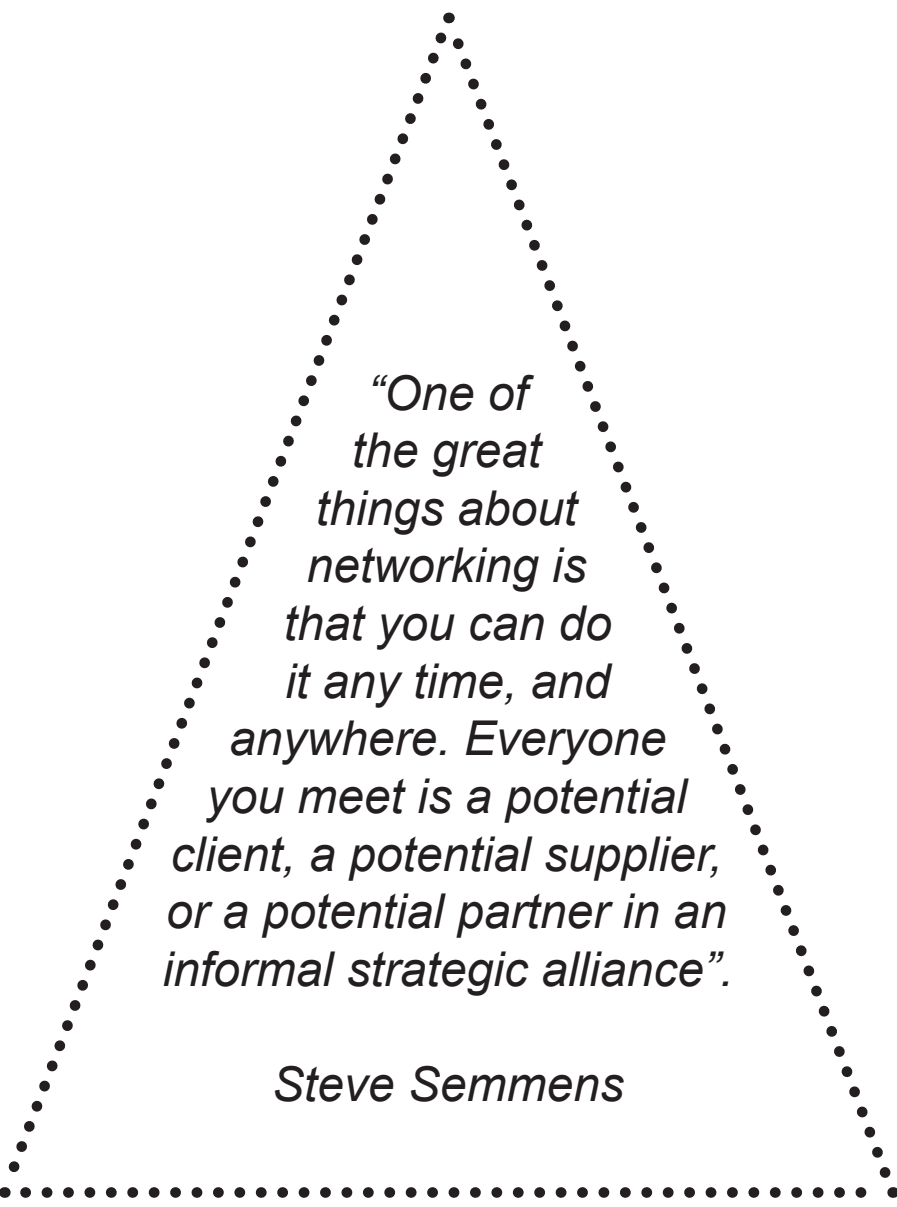
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I live by some very simple networking systems. I keep them simple to ensure that I practice them regularly. You might also like to try:

- Sending a thank you card to someone in your network every day. Emails are great, but for me, hand-written cards are much better. They stand out from the crowd, don't get deleted, and are rarely thrown away. Rather, they tend to linger in a highly-visible place for some time as a form of recognition or appreciation shown for a job well done.
  
- Aiming to give away one quality referral every day – providing the name of the person, their contact details, some background to their needs and a request for the referee to connect with them within 24 hours. I love receiving feedback from the referee, advising whether they were able to help my contact or not. And usually, if they are not the person for the job, they will refer another person who is more suitable, which builds our networks even more.
  
- Attending one networking event every week (either social or business) - preferably where there are at least five people you don't already know. My intention at my weekly networking activity is to have a quality conversation with at least five people. From experience, I know that 25% of the people I meet will either become referees, clients or prospects. And of course if I only talk to people whom I already know, I reduce my chances of extending my network and building my connections.

- Including business cards with all hard copy correspondence (snail mail). I give out a business card as a form of greeting whenever I meet a stranger or make a new connection. If I sense that it might be seen as pushy to give my card first, I ask the other person for their business card, and then offer mine in return.
  
- Looking for opportunities to perform an unexpected act of kindness every day. Do something for which you know you will not receive any recognition or acknowledgement, for example look out for shopping trolleys that have been abandoned in shopping centre car parks, often rendering a perfectly good space inaccessible. Move the trolley to the collection point (or use it for your own shopping), and enjoy knowing that you have helped a perfect stranger.
  
- Setting aside a minimum of 15 minutes per day for networking – whether that means a phone call, an email, a fax (old technology, but they don't get deleted), a thank you note, a greeting to a stranger or a kind word to a fellow worker or neighbour – it's all part of networking.

None of these activities are rocket science, yet done consistently, they will help you to strengthen your network more quickly, and you will be considered professional, generous, consistent and memorable – for all the right reasons.



*“One of the great things about networking is that you can do it any time, and anywhere. Everyone you meet is a potential client, a potential supplier, or a potential partner in an informal strategic alliance”.*

*Steve Semmens*

# Networking Anywhere in the World

## Chapter Two

## **Networking Anywhere in the World** **How and why you need to do it**

*Do you ever wonder how people can  
relocate to a new country and fit right in?*

*Do you ever think about packing up your  
world and moving to another place?*

*Do you daydream about living in a foreign  
country and experiencing a total change?*

*Do you ever wonder how  
another culture operates?*

I did. Being an Aussie, and growing up around cities, I have always had a passion for travel. I tell people I only work to support a work – and shoe – habit! Other cultures fascinate me, and experiencing local traditions inspires me, so when my husband was offered a chance to relocate overseas with his work, we jumped at the opportunity.

After exploring one opportunity in Asia and another in the USA, we chose to relocate from Sydney, Australia to Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Never heard of it? Don't worry, neither had we! I didn't even know where Pennsylvania was on a map of the USA. East Coast? West Coast? Up near Canada, or down

Mexico way? I had always admired people who could hear an American accent and pick exactly where in the States that person was from. After living here for a while now, I have come to see how they develop that skill. I thought that because Aussies and Americans both speak English, it would be easy, but I found I had a lot to learn. While we may both speak English, we actually speak very different languages, and are culturally very different.

Language issues aside, I've made many observations through living and working here. Americans are so kind, generous, and always willing to help you. They want you to succeed. They believe in the entrepreneurial spirit, and they have a strong work ethic! While Aussies work hard and play hard, Americans work hard and...work hard! They are passionate about what they do, their families and their focus. I love it!

If you are thinking of relocating to a new country, or even a new city, here are some strategies that will assist you to make the transition as smooth as possible, and help accelerate both your business and personal growth. When I made my move, I was quickly able to establish a social infrastructure, gain new clients, build a strong network, and develop an international profile and reputation. The following strategies played an important part in my business success.

### **Create Your Home**

#### **Establish a base**

When you move to a new location, it is imperative that you start by establishing a solid home base. When my husband and I arrived in Doylestown, we quickly found a suitable home in the suburbs, and I then spent several months full-time remodelling, including cleaning, scraping, painting, repairing, removing wall paper and making general improvements, to ensure that we had somewhere we could call home. Find a suitable space and make it your own. If possible, include mementos, photographs, pictures and paintings from your previous home.

#### **Introduce yourself to your new neighbours**

When we arrived in Doylestown, I wrote a note explaining that we had moved here from Australia, and included our contact details. I made several copies, clipped a small koala to each one, and dropped them in all our neighbours' mailboxes. Not surprisingly, we soon got to meet all our neighbours, who were fascinated to suddenly have a couple of Aussies in their backyard. We were fortunate to move into what has proven to be a very social neighbourhood, and our neighbours were happy to provide advice and recommendations for many of our everyday needs while we were settling in.

#### **Create your personal network**

We all know how important it is to develop a business network, however creating a personal network is also vital. Strike up conversations with everyone you meet, and ask for recommendations for doctors, dentists, hairdressers, lawn



services and any other services you might need. Having moved from sunny Australia, you can imagine my surprise when we had our very first snowfall. Our phone rang off the hook with neighbours offering us their 'snowplough guy's' contact information. We didn't even know we needed a snowplough guy! We also learnt we needed a chimney sweep (yes, they really do exist), a firewood supplier, a septic tank service provider, a well specialist ... Yes, you definitely need to build your personal network. Now, we are able to return the favour by providing recommendations to others (many of whom have lived here longer than we have).

### **Keep a glossary of terms**

As soon as I arrived, I created a spreadsheet listing Aussie terms and the corresponding American translation. I quickly learned that some words and phrases simply do not translate! Keep an eye on your language. If you start to see people's eyes glaze over, or a fake smile appear, maybe you have lost them in conversation. Be aware of your comments, tone and use of slang terms. Fortunately, Americans love Aussies, so my transition was easy. They love learning the Aussie terms for things, and crazy Aussie sayings. Teach the locals your language while you are learning theirs – it makes for fun conversations and builds friendships!

# Create Your Network

### **Check out your local community**

Find your local Chamber of Commerce. Attend an event to get a feel for the group, the types of businesses represented and the committees they run, and grab a copy of their calendar of events. This group is an integral part of most communities, and can be a great 'go to' resource when you need any type of trade, products, professional services or advice. Join the Chamber, and get involved. Serve on committees, volunteer, and meet as many people as possible. The Chamber in my local area helped me to quickly establish resources, learn about my local community, and get involved in fun events.

### **Google local networks**

My first move was to google local women's networking groups. I had only been in my new home for two days when I found a local women's group that was due to meet in a nearby community hall in about an hour's time, so I pulled a suit out of my suitcase, quickly ironed it and headed out the door. I had only been there 10 minutes when I met the organiser, and told her I was a speaker. She introduced me to the group's 'speaker seeker', and I was promptly booked to speak to the group several months later! The moral of the story – show up. Invest time and effort in local groups. You will learn so much about your area, and meet many wonderful people. Incidentally, this group also introduced me to my local Chamber of Commerce.

### **Google city networks**

If you don't live in a city, locate the three largest cities closest to you (within 2-3 hours driving distance) and research their networking groups to see if there are any with which you want to become involved. Visit these groups twice before deciding to join. City networks may have a different type of member, and you need to be sure that these are people with whom you want to network.

### **Shop the networks**

Ask everyone you meet to recommend networks to which they belong. Visit these groups, and ask to be included on their mailing lists. Discover groups that fit both your needs, and those of your business.

### **Establish a specific networking email address**

Create a specific email address to provide at networking events. This will avoid spam (yes, unfortunately it's a reality) going to your regular email address. Give this address to everyone you meet at the networks you visit, and also use it if you want to be added to mailing lists. Check emails to this address on a regular basis to learn about forthcoming events and initiate communication with worthwhile contacts.

### **Ask questions of the networks**

Here is a list of questions to ask the person in charge of a network you are considering joining:

- How often do you meet?
- What day of the week and time of day do you meet?
- Are you penalised for not attending meetings?
- Do you meet in summer? Winter?
- What is involved in membership?
- How much does it cost to be a member?
- What are the member benefits?
- What industries are represented in this group?
- How many members attend each event?
- How many guests attend each event?
- How many events can you attend as a guest before joining?
- Can you bring a guest to events?
- Are there certain protocols you need to be aware of?
- Do people swap business cards at the events?
- Are there committees to get involved with?
- What are the major fund-raising activities?
- Do you support a charity? If so, which one?
- Are there vendor display table opportunities to promote my products or services?
- Are there sponsorship opportunities to raise my profile and build awareness?
- Are you affiliated with any other networks?
- Are you a local, national or international group?
- Can I visit other groups as part of my membership?

The answers to these questions will help create a picture of what this network values and how it operates, and will help you to decide if you want to be involved.

### **Travel far and wide**

Decide how far you are prepared to travel to attend networking events and committee activities. Once you have established how far you will travel, identify the networking groups within reasonable reach and begin visiting them.

### **Commit to three key networks**

Once you have researched the available networks and decided which ones are right for you, commit to three of those networks for a period of six to twelve months.

### **Stand out from the crowd**

Find professional groups that represent the industries you want to target, and aim to be the only person from your industry who networks with those groups. When I moved to the States, I identified a desire to work with attorneys. I located professional networking groups for attorneys, and now I am regularly the only non-attorney at their networking functions. It's a great way to build my knowledge of the industry, and make valuable connections.

## **Create Your Reputation**

### **Ask ‘How can I help you?’**

This powerful question quickly builds rapport, and shows your desire to connect people and help grow their businesses. Be genuine in your desire to help other people and build their networks. I ask this question constantly, and have been able to help hundreds of people find new clients, make new connections, forge new alliances, and generate new business.

### **Be a connector**

Establish a reputation as the ‘go to’ person in your community. Constantly promote other people and their businesses. Make recommendations daily, and people will quickly learn that you are well-connected, and that you genuinely want to help them.

### **Use email to make introductions**

An easy technique (and one that crosses all boundaries) is to use email introductions. If you know of two people who you believe should meet, send an email, which might look something like this:

*G’day Robyn and Alessandra,*

*I wanted to introduce you to each other, as I think you can really help each other in your respective businesses.*

*Robyn – Alessandra is a very accomplished woman in the financial services industry who is keen to write and publish a book as a client gift. She is well-connected, and also great fun.*

*Alessandra – Robyn is a highly sought after speaker and also the founder of Sea Change Publishing. She can provide strategic direction right through to the delivery of your book, and I know you would enjoy working with her. She is someone I admire and enjoy working with.*

*Robyn, meet Alessandra; Alessandra meet Robyn. I will leave the two of you to connect at your convenience.*

*Take care,  
Neen James*

I often use this template. As you can see, you simply make an introduction, tell each recipient a little about the other, and then leave them to connect. Many new alliances and strategic partnerships have been formed because I have taken two minutes to create an introductory email. This costs you nothing more than a couple of minutes of your time, but can mean a world of difference to someone else.

### **Volunteer**

Get on committees, offer to be a greeter to welcome people to an event, offer to sell raffle tickets, help with the event registration desk, help with mail outs, bring food to events – explore how you can get involved, and jump in feet first! This was an integral part of my networking strategy in the US. I became actively involved in serving in the networks I chose to join by becoming a greeter (a great way to meet people and build your local profile), speaking at events, helping with the registration desk, serving on committees (I still do) and providing raffle prizes and donating gifts to raise money.

### **Donate products and services**

If the networks you visit have lucky door prizes, or use raffles to raise money, donate something, either personally or through your business. Various networks have different ways of recognising this approach, but it shows your generosity, and gets your products and services into the hands of potential new customers. I do this at my local Chamber most months, and people always look forward to winning my donated gifts and services.

### **Give first**

Explore ways you can help, give, serve, donate and build other people's businesses first. Discover new ways to assist the people around you. Always give first, and you'll stand out from the crowd.

### **Ask for introductions**

When you have established a few solid relationships, ask for introductions. Ask people to introduce you to their database of connections. If you come from a place of giving first, they will be happy to help you.

### **Ask 'Who are the movers and shakers I need to meet?'**

This question contributed to my success in quickly building a network of well-connected, high-quality individuals who all wanted to assist me in growing my business. Every time I met someone, I would ask them 'Who are the movers and shakers I need to meet?'

The same set of names kept coming up time and time again, which told me that those were the people who were influential,



and the ones I wanted to know. Don't be scared to ask. If you don't ask, people won't know who you want to meet, and won't be able to help.

### **Speak**

Offer to be a speaker. Networks are constantly seeking high quality, content packed speakers. Beware though – don't use the opportunity to deliver a sales pitch. Instead, use the time to impart knowledge and strategies that the audience will enjoy, value, and be able to apply to their businesses. Speaking is a great marketing strategy for any businessperson.

### **Show up**

It's so simple it hardly seems worth mentioning, but more than half the battle is won when you simply show up. Be reliable, and make sure you show up, on time, whenever you say you will be somewhere. Turn up to all events and opportunities fully present and prepared, in a positive frame of mind and fully focused, never distracted. Participate actively in conversations and forums, make connections, and regularly ask thoughtful questions.

### **Arrive early and stay late**

Don't rush in and out of networking events. Invest the time in arriving early, offer to help the organiser or speaker in setting up, and stay behind for the informal networking that occurs at the end of events. This is usually a more relaxed way of meeting people and making valuable connections.

### **Take a high profile position**

When I moved to my new home in the States, I was approached to speak to a women's network that was trying to relaunch in a major city. In the process of negotiating with the organiser, I learned that they were looking for a leader to grow the group. At first, I thought I couldn't possibly do the job, as I had only been in the country less than three months, didn't know anyone, didn't know the city, and had no network! It was my husband who encouraged me to do it, saying "You're going to be having coffee with people anyway, so why don't you do it?" I am pleased to report that in a very short period of time we were able to grow the group to become one of the most recognised networks in the city and one of the most successful chapters in what is an international organisation. The position helped me build my community profile, grow other people's businesses, grow my own business and, most importantly, helped establish great friendships. Moral of the story – jump right in, and work out the details along the way. That's what I did, and it worked really well.

### **Get published**

Write articles for local papers, contribute to editors' columns, send press releases and interesting photos, and form relationships with journalists. If there is an opportunity to have your photo taken, grab it. If you can write about an experience you had with someone to help promote their business, do it. You'd be surprised how many people will recall seeing your picture or article in the local papers. This happened to me on many occasions, and often I didn't even know anything about it!

### **Get a regular column**

Offering to write a productivity tip that was published every week in a city newspaper was also a great strategic alliance. Editors and journalists are constantly looking for new talent, fresh ideas, and interesting stories. Discover ways in which you can help them, share your expertise, and create a clever angle for them to use.

### **Learn international etiquette**

When in a foreign country, ask questions about protocol, both in general, and in relation to conducting business. Undertake research, buy books, read newspapers, and interview industry leaders. Ensure you are educated about the way people do business in the country you are visiting or living in. This is important to ensure that you always conduct yourself in a professional manner, and never unintentionally offend anyone.

## **Create your business**

### **Create a business plan**

It is surprising the number of businesses that attempt to operate without a plan. My best advice is to employ someone to assist you who specialises in this area. Everyone can write their own plan, but having an objective third party to help you, and ensure that you cover all requirements, will accelerate your business growth and stretch both you and your business goals.

### **Create a personal public relations program**

If you can do this yourself, great. If not, employ someone who specialises in this field to help you. Spend time developing relationships with journalists and public relations firms. Send regular press releases to your Chamber of Commerce when you win new clients, publish new articles and books, or have speaking engagements that might interest their members.

### **Create a toolkit**

Create resources to assist in building your business, including business cards, a press release template, a website, brochure and professionally photographed headshots. Invest in quality resources so you are always prepared for any opportunity. If you want to be a speaker at a local networking event, they will require all of these resources to help promote the event.

### **Conduct tele-coffees**

A tele-coffee is where you make a coffee, your contact makes a coffee, and then you talk on the telephone. My tele-coffees last no more than 15 minutes, and have a clear agenda. I love this form of communication, because I can do it from anywhere in the world while still meeting and serving others. Never underestimate what can be achieved in a 15-minute telephone conversation. Specific questions I ask my tele-coffee partner include:

- What is on your agenda today?
- Tell me more about your business?
- How can I help you?
- How do I know if someone is a good referral for you?

These key questions ensure the call has a clear purpose, and stays on schedule. As a productivity consultant, it is also important to me that time is respected, both theirs and mine. Many people are now requesting tele-coffees. They're a great way for me to be a connector, and also to help grow my own business connections.

### **Host someone**

Whenever you have an opportunity to invite a guest or a client to a networking event or function, take advantage of it. Host someone by paying for their ticket, arranging transportation if required, and meeting them when they arrive at the venue. During the event, introduce them to people you think they should meet. This is a fun way to build your reputation, your network and your business.

### **Set a timeframe**

Give yourself a period of time in which to grow your network and your business. Set targets, goals and deliverables so that you know where you are heading and how you are doing in terms of business growth. This also helps prevent you from being discouraged when your business building is going through a slow period.

### **Be brand savvy**

Identify which brands are important for you as clients, and target those industries. The head offices of several major pharmaceutical companies are located in the area where I live. I soon discovered that they only want to deal with people who have experience in other pharmaceutical firms, so I volunteered to conduct a complimentary lunchtime training

## Strategic Networking

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session for the largest firm in the industry in exchange for a testimonial on company letterhead about my work, and audience feedback. This became a valuable tool when I began targeting other businesses in this field.

### **Create fans and advocates**

If you are a connector, giving first and always discovering ways to serve others, you will eventually develop a 'fan base'. Ask these people to help you; ask them for recommendations on people you should meet, and for introductions. Always provide feedback in relation to any connections they make for you, and always keep them in the loop regarding any business you do with those connections.

### **Thank others for recommendations**

If someone refers a contact to me and it results in business, I always send thank you gifts or notes of appreciation. This small gesture reminds people how much I value their endorsement, and lets them know that I appreciate them.

.....  
: *Actively pursuing a personal network and building* :  
: *strategic alliances is a valuable approach, regardless* :  
: *of where you live, and it is never too late. You may* :  
: *have lived in the same town for the last twenty years,* :  
: *but there are still people you need to know, and* :  
: *people who need to know you.* :  
.....

Applying the strategies I have outlined will help you to create your network, build your reputation and profile, and grow your business.

# Networking for Direct Marketing

## Chapter Three

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## Networking for Direct Marketing

*“Hi. My name is Pushy Peta. Here’s my business card. I must tell you about the most fantastic products. They will make you look, feel, smell better, save you time, blah, blah, blah, blah. These products are so good you really must hold a demonstration at your place to show them to all your friends. In fact, why don’t you join the company, and then you can get the products at a discount. The company has so many incentives that you could be earning a fortune in no time, and you could retire from your current job within two years. Are you free to meet tomorrow so I can tell you all about it?”*

Poor Pushy Peta looks so forlorn when her ‘target’ mumbles that she is busy for the next six months, and quickly excuses herself, however Pushy Peta doesn’t let this get her down. She knows her products are good, so she moves on. “Hi. My name is Pushy Peta...”. Unable to get an appointment with anyone, she eventually leaves the function feeling confused and demoralised. She knows her products are fantastic (and they are), so why doesn’t anyone want to meet with her so she can share the wonderful benefits and change their lives?

You may laugh, but I have actually met Pushy Peta at numerous functions. She is so enthusiastic about her products, and the networking company she belongs to, that she shares everything in one meeting, and expects everyone to be just as enthusiastic about her products and the company.



Before you rush out the door to your next networking function with your 50 business cards to distribute, pause for a moment and think about why you began using these products, and ultimately joined the company. Who introduced you to the products? Was it a family member, friend, neighbour or work colleague who recommended or showed you the products? Did they invite you to a demonstration or information session? The key here is in the fact that it was probably someone you knew – someone with whom you already had a *relationship*. Would you have tried the products or attended the demonstration if it had been a complete stranger who approached you?

By building relationships, you get to know the person and their needs, and they in turn get the opportunity to know you better.

**People do business with people,  
not products or companies.**

Before you bought the products, you probably passed through several stages:

Stage 1 – Cold (you know nothing about the products)

At best, you had probably only heard about the products, or had been invited to a demonstration by someone you knew.

Stage 2 – Warm (you've experienced the products)

Did you buy the products as soon as you saw them? Chances are, you needed to experience them before

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you bought them. You may have needed to try them on if it was clothing, lingerie, skincare, makeup, perfume, etc. How did they look or feel? You may have needed to read up on the benefits and testimonials if they were health products. If they were cooking or storage products, you may have had to see them demonstrated.

Stage 3 – Very warm (you like the products)

After you experienced the products, you determined whether they suited *your needs*.

Stage 4 – Hot (you purchase the products)

You experienced the products, decided that they met your needs, and purchased them.

Once you decide to purchase the products you then have several options:

- You may be a once only purchaser
- You become a repeat purchaser
- You decide to join the company for the purchasing benefits
- You hold a demonstration
- You refer the products/company to someone else.

Joining the company is a bigger decision, but it still involves progressing through the four stages outlined above. This can take anywhere from a few hours to months or even years, depending on the individual and the products involved.

Let's return to your experience in becoming familiar with the products, where you have reached Stage 4, at which point you experienced and liked the products, and decided to purchase them.

You may now be ready to progress through some further stages:

Stage 5 – The benefits of joining the company, and the company structure, are shared with you. This may involve being able to purchase the products at a discount for your own use, demonstrating the products to others if it is a party plan, recruiting other consultants in the case of a multi-level marketing organisation, or some combination of these. Each company has its own unique structure and approach.

Stage 6 – You discuss and evaluate the benefits of joining through conversations, observing others, attending demonstrations, obtaining testimonials, attending information sessions, etc.

Stage 7 – You are attracted to the potential benefits offered by the company, and decide to join them as a consultant or representative.

If you think about these stages, and how long it might take you to move through them, do you really think you would have tried or bought the products, let alone joined the company, just because you met a stranger at a networking event who said you should?

## Networking At Events

How, then, do you use networking events to create contacts who will ultimately want to try and buy your products, and join your company?

*You must earn the right to ask for a sale,  
or to do business with someone.*

There are three stages to every event; the 3 'P's of networking:

Preparation – Before the event

Participation – During the event

Planned Follow Up – After the event

### Preparation

Before you even commit to attending a networking event, you need to ask yourself these questions:

- What do you hope to achieve by attending this particular event?
- Is there specific time allocated to networking within the program?
- Are you attending to meet new people and develop future contacts?
- Are you attending to decide if a particular network suits your needs?

- Is the event likely to attract the type of people with whom you hope to connect (for example, if you are a cosmetics consultant, it will be of more benefit to attend a women's networking lunch rather than the local council's business meeting)?

### **Ensure you know all the details of the event**

Look up the address, plan your transport, and allow plenty of travel time to ensure that you arrive in good time. Check on parking arrangements if necessary. Check if there is a particular dress code.

### **You never have a second chance to make a first impression!**

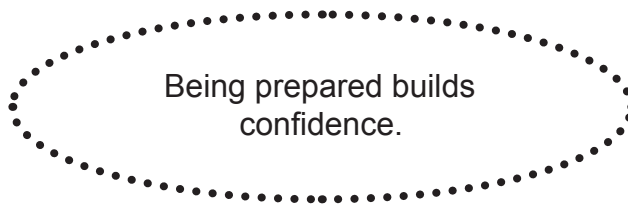
The image you project by way of your appearance is the first message you convey in any new situation. Wear something that makes you look and feel great, but remember, you are there to represent your company and promote your products, so ensure that you are well presented. If you are feeling bold, wear something that makes you stand out from the crowd, like a bright jacket or scarf, or a distinctive tie. Ensure you present your products in the best light. If it is fragrances or aromatherapy, make sure you smell wonderful – but not overpowering. If it is skin-care and cosmetics, your make-up should be immaculate. Make sure that you positively glow if it is health products (but don't overdo the fake tan!) and wear eye-catching outfits if your product is clothing. As for lingerie, use your imagination – just look and feel sexy, without starting a riot! And always stand tall and look confident – even if you don't feel it!

### **Take plenty of business cards**

Have your cards in a professional card holder. Keep them in your pocket so you don't have to grovel around in your handbag or briefcase if someone asks for a card. Ensure that any literature you distribute or display is in pristine condition.

### **Prepare your introduction**

Be succinct. Don't ramble. Think of something to create interest. For example, rather than saying "*Hi, my name is Michelle, and I'm a Tupperware representative*", say something like "*Hi, my name is Michelle and I help people to organise their lives and save them time and money*", or maybe "*Hi, my name is Doug and I help people to lead a healthy, active lifestyle*", if you are marketing health products. This encourages people to ask you more about your business, and the conversation is off and running. When you have prepared your introduction, practise it on family and friends and keep refining it until it feels and sounds natural. The aim of the introduction is to *create* conversation, not to stop it in its tracks!



## Participation

### **Arrive early**

Take a moment to pause, relax and focus before entering the reception area to network prior to the commencement of the event. You often make your best connections in the foyer before the function has even begun, and it also presents an opportunity to meet someone with whom you may like to sit during the event. Introduce yourself to people who are standing by themselves. Chances are they are also a first time attendee, and feeling just as nervous as you are. Another benefit of arriving early is that it is much easier to enter a room containing just a few people and begin talking than it is to be confronted by a mass of people who are already chatting away in various groups.

### **Mingle**

If you attend a function with others from your organisation, split up! You are there to meet new people. It amazes me how many people spend the time, energy and money to attend a networking event to just talk to their friends or work colleagues. If a table has been reserved for your group, ask the organiser to remove the reserved or company sign so you may all sit on different tables to create networking opportunities. Meet your friends at the end of the event to discuss who they met and share ideas on how to follow up leads.

### **Conversation is essential to networking**

Frederick L Collins once said that *“There are two types of people. Those who come into a room and say, “Well, here I am!”, and those who come in and say, “Ah, there you are.”*

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When people share stories, interests and ideas, they build rapport. Prepare a few conversation openers before you arrive. Stay up to date with current events by skimming the newspaper each day for the major headlines.

### **The best networkers are the best listeners**

Learn to listen, in order to learn. You have two ears and one mouth for a reason! Ask open-ended questions, such as *“What’s your opinion on...?”*, or *“How do you like to spend your spare time?”*, or *“Can you tell me more about what you do?”* People like to talk about their favourite topic – themselves! Don’t interrupt them. If they pause for a moment, count to three before responding. They may just be taking a moment to collect their thoughts before continuing. Most importantly, concentrate on the other person’s agenda, rather than yours. You are there to learn about them, not to talk about yourself. How can you learn whether they need what you have to offer, or how you can help them, if you are constantly talking rather than listening?

### **Give people your undivided attention**

Stand or sit in a relaxed position, turn your body towards them, and look directly into their eyes. Don’t keep glancing over their shoulder in the hope that someone more interesting is entering the room. Body language is very important in showing the person that you are interested in them and in what they have to say. Occasionally paraphrase what they have said back to them, or ask questions to show that you are listening attentively, and have understood what they are saying.



### **When should you share business cards?**

Only give someone a business card if they ask for one, or in response to asking for and receiving one of their cards. After you have established rapport through an initial conversation, it is only natural that you ask the other person for their business card. When they give you their card, study it carefully and ask one or two questions, such as the reason for the choice of colours or logo, or where their organisation is based. This conveys genuine interest, and will help remind you about that person when you next look through your growing pile of business cards. Show that you respect their card by placing it in your card holder (at the back, so their card won't be confused with your own cards, which you draw from the front). This is the ideal time to hand them one of your cards in response.

### **The networking event is not the time to sell anything**

Rather, it is the time to build rapport. Don't try to cram everything into your first conversation. Sometimes, people feel so comfortable with a person they have just met that they want to share everything immediately. Remember however that you are both there to network, so if you connect well with someone, arrange a time to contact them to follow up, and then move on.

### **In order to receive, first you must give**

The more we give, the more we come to realise both how easy it is to do, and how rewarding it can be. Aim to help others without expectation of anything in return. Provide referrals or key information that may assist someone in achieving their goal or completing a task at every opportunity. This does not always have to be business related. I recently met a successful

business woman at a networking event who told me that her favourite form of pampering was a massage, but she always struggled to find the time. I asked her where she worked, and when she told me that she worked in the city, I mentioned that I knew a fantastic masseur who operated close to where she worked, and so she might be able to find time to indulge herself during her lunch break, or after work before heading home. She was most appreciative, and although I didn't gain any business as a result of our conversation, I certainly helped to make her life more pleasurable, which is a lovely feeling.

*The key to networking at functions is to be yourself,  
and treat others as you would like to be treated.  
Build relationships that can be nurtured  
and developed over time.*

### Planned Follow Up

**A successful networker ALWAYS follows up** after meeting new people. It is important that you do this within 72 hours of the event. Taking the time to follow up indicates that you are professional, courteous, and interested in building a relationship for the benefit of both parties. Your follow up shouldn't be ad hoc however – you need to have a plan, which includes how you will sort and store the business cards that you collect, building and maintaining a data base, contacting new leads, meetings with contacts, creating a referral base, keeping in touch with customers, developing ongoing relationships, and much more. As soon as possible after each

event, sort out the cards you received, and write the following information on each card:

- the date of the event
- the nature of the event you attended
- something significant about the person, e.g. wore a red jacket, or liked water skiing
- any follow up action required, e.g. email masseur details.

Many business cards are printed on both sides, so use mini post-it notes to attach these details if there is no room to write on the card itself.

### **Filing business cards**

You need to create a file in which you keep your cards. You can buy suitable files and plastic pockets specifically designed for business cards at office supply stores. Create a series of headings, such as the name of the networking event, or business categories. Find a system that suits you and your business, but most importantly, file your cards within 24 hours of each event, while the people's details are still fresh in your mind. If you are a serious networker, it is worthwhile investing in a computer data base, which should be updated after each event. Ensure your system is easy to use so that you are comfortable updating it and using it regularly.

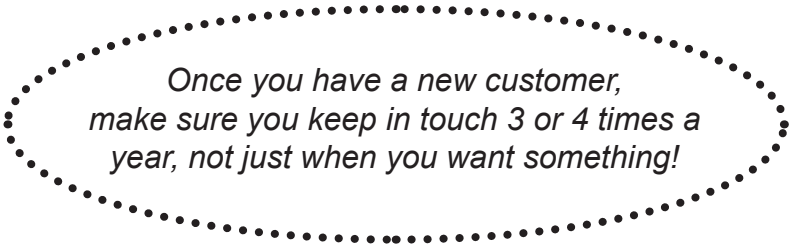
### There are various ways to follow up:

- When using **email**, keep it short and to the point. Put a catchy heading in the subject line, such as 'Catch Up', or 'Let's do coffee'. Think of all the emails you receive every day!
- Using the **phone** or voicemail allows you to convey the energy and excitement in your voice.
- And there's always **snail mail** – I have never heard anyone complain about receiving a handwritten thank you note, in fact I know many people who keep thank you notes, as they are so rare these days. You will certainly be remembered, and don't forget to always include your business card.

Ask each person you meet which method of follow up they prefer, and use that method where possible.

When following up by phone, always identify yourself and remind the person where you met. I am always thrown when someone rings me and says, "Hi Bev, it's Sue", leaving my mind racing trying to think of all the Sues I know, and distracting me from what they are saying. Ask them if they have a moment to talk, then proceed with something like *"I'm interested in finding out more about what you do, and wondered if you had time for a 20-minute coffee?"*, or *"I'm following up on a conversation we had at the... function last Thursday night..."*.

These openers could also be used in an email, or when leaving a message on voice mail. Be friendly, brief and to the point. Respect the other person's time. When arranging a meeting, always ensure you are both clear on the date, time, venue and duration. If they can only spare 30 minutes, respect their schedule, and plan what you are going to talk about accordingly. If the meeting is not going to take place for a week or so, confirm the details by email or written note. Not only is this courteous, but it is also professional. Whenever you initiate the meeting, always offer to pay for the coffee or lunch.



*Once you have a new customer,  
make sure you keep in touch 3 or 4 times a  
year, not just when you want something!*

### **Simple tips for keeping customers**

Here are some ways for Party Planners/Network Marketers to stay in touch with their customers:

- Send a handwritten note after their products have been delivered, thanking them for hosting the party or demonstration.
- Send a card for their birthday.
- Send Christmas or New Year cards (be aware of different cultural and religious protocols) and congratulatory cards on special occasions, such as the birth of a baby.

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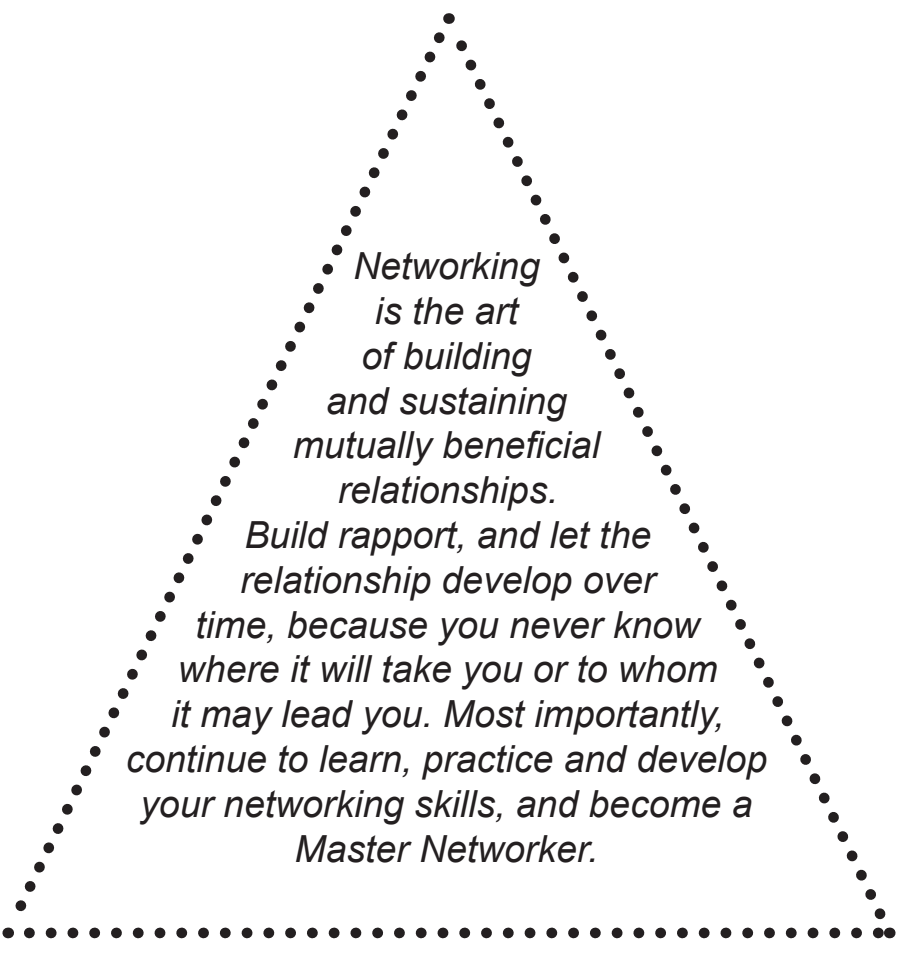
- Send regular flyers or newsletters with product updates or specials.
- Email product tips, updates or specials.
- Offer regular re-ordering bonuses for orders of a specified value.
- Develop a reward program to encourage regular repeat orders.

Keep a good stock of special occasion cards – thank you, birthday, congratulatory, get well and blank – on hand at all times. Having these at your fingertips makes it easy to send them at appropriate times.

Always include your business card with all correspondence. People often misplace cards, and if they receive surplus cards, they can always share them with friends.

If you don't have time to follow up all your customers regularly, consider enlisting the help of a family member or friend. If you want to retain loyal clients and build your business, it is imperative that you stay in touch with your network.

By staying in touch, you ensure that you are always in the front of their mind when they think about your product. Not only will you develop a loyal customer, but you will increase your chances of being referred on to their friends. And by exceeding their expectations, you may even convince them to join your company.



*Networking  
is the art  
of building  
and sustaining  
mutually beneficial  
relationships.*

*Build rapport, and let the  
relationship develop over  
time, because you never know  
where it will take you or to whom  
it may lead you. Most importantly,  
continue to learn, practice and develop  
your networking skills, and become a  
Master Networker.*

# Forensic Networking

## Chapter Four



## **Forensic Networking - for serious networkers**

After more than fifteen years of experience in the speaking industry, I found that over time not only had the size of my audiences increased, but also the size of the organisations with which I was working. I put this down to a number of things: my reputation had increased as I wrote articles and features for industry magazines, and spoke at large association events; the need for networking became increasingly important, not only for business development people, but also for organisations in general – staff might have had great technical skills, but they had very little experience with the soft skills like networking; and the term networking was appearing more and more frequently in the media – it was becoming something about which people knew they needed to learn more.

I then started to realise that in order to break into large organisations (whether defined by turnover or by number of employees) one really needed to be quite strategic, and certainly very professional. And the more touch points or connection points within an organisation, the greater the chance you had of getting a positive response from the decision maker. Large organisations contain multiple pockets of influence, and cross-networking opportunities abound once you get in there – but exactly how to do that is often the dilemma.

I first heard the expression ‘Forensic Networking’ from a very successful senior partner of an international accounting firm.

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This was something the firm did prior to meeting with potential clients, and included accessing public domain information about the potential client – their non work-related interests, and their networks – looking for touch points within their already substantial client base who could potentially be an advocate for their firm.

.....  
:     *The bigger the potential client, the*     :  
:     *more touch points/referees you need*     :  
:     *to cultivate.*     :  
.....

I came to realise that many people already do this, but not necessarily in a systematic or strategic way. As a consequence, the results can be very inconsistent. We know that maintaining networks and connections is greatly assisted by the use of good systems, so I have come up with a model to assist with your forensic networking activity. Be warned – this requires time, effort and energy, and some of the information is easier to access than other material, but as a rule of thumb, the greater the effort, the better the result. It is my belief that you really only get one shot at a potential client – one chance to prove your worth or value to that organisation. And if you blow that opportunity when you meet with the decision maker/s, it may be a long, long time before they give you a second chance. So the more touch points you can locate, the better the chances of a favourable outcome.

A quick story – I once met with a client in the financial services industry who had booked me to present a full day ‘Networking for Bankers’ program. Our meeting, in my mind, was to serve as a briefing session to clarify the desired program outcomes.

In the client's mind, however, it had a very different aim. While names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals, our conversation went something like this:

*"Hi Robyn, glad you could stop by this afternoon. Don't sit down, this won't take long."* (Here I was thinking I would be there for at least an hour, and now it seemed like three minutes was more likely)...

*"We're looking forward to your 'Networking for Bankers' program next week. Sue Smith from Newcastle, John James from Warrnambool and Fred from HR saw you speak at the National Institute conference and said you were pretty good, and we would benefit from getting you in. I'm on a board with Sue and John – they don't work for the bank, as you know, but I trust their opinion. Robyn, I want to be straight with you. We have 600 business development staff that you could potentially train nationally. If next week's session goes well, we'll work out a stack of dates with you for the next few months and get everyone trained up. If next week is a dud, and I have to warn you, I have put some really tough cookies in your group – but I figure if you can win them over and they come away raving fans, then you are worth your high fee – well, you might have to wait a long time to get paid. Thanks for coming in Robyn. See Sue on the way out and confirm your logistical stuff."*

How pressured do you think I was feeling! The good news is that the session went well. I did win over the tough cookies, and went on to train the 600 staff. In hindsight, I had the trust of three people, whom the decision maker trusted. Without that, I would not have been booked. And at the time I met

those people, who incidentally all worked for much smaller organisations, none of them were wearing signs saying “Be really nice to me, and I will introduce you to a potentially large client.”

*Be friendly to everyone. You never know who they know, and to whom they could potentially refer you.*

There are two parts to forensic networking. The first involves your potential client, and the second involves you and your commitment to securing that client.

### **Part one – Potential Clients**

The first step consists of a list of questions about your client’s organisations, networks, and potential touch points/connectors. Much of this information will be in the public domain, although at times it might feel like you are piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. Set up a two-ring binder filled with plastic sleeves and dividers and start your forensic activity. Alternatively, you may like to keep an electronic file. At first, it may just be a jumble of information, but as you continue to work on it, the patterns and images gradually become clearer.

#### **Identify your potential client**

You should be able to obtain lots of information from their website about their executive team and their products and services. Study all this information, highlight the most relevant pieces, and prepare your own organisational summary. Use

your file to store the information you find on web pages, as well as your summary and key points. Also file copies of any further information you are able to obtain from newspapers, magazines, etc. Remember, you are virtually building a dossier on this organisation.

**Identify the key decision maker/s and the people in their inner circle if possible**

Inner circles can be formed as a result of connections going back to old school or university ties, previous work together in other organisations, cities or countries (ex-pats invariably forge very strong ties), membership of special interest groups in areas such as the arts, sports, environmental groups, politics, etc. The list is truly endless, and the point of going to all this effort to illustrate this is to encourage you to make the effort to check whether some of the members of their inner circle are also in your own inner circle, or current or past clients. Which leads to the next point:

**Who do you know in their inner circle, or who do you know who knows someone in their inner circle?**

Once you have identified the inner circle, you can then make contact with your network and ask for help. “I wonder if you can help me. We are keen to work with XYZ, and it appears that John Smith is a key player there. I understand you know John quite well, and was wondering what advice you could give me about the best way to approach him.” Of course, they have the right to politely decline your request, but more often than not, they will recommend that you attend an event that they know John Smith will also be attending. It may be a community event or a function for a charity that they support,

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or a sporting or artistic event. You then need to find out what is required to attend the event – buying tickets, or booking a table or a corporate box. It's entirely possible that your contact will invite you to join them, but you should be prepared to take the initiative and offer to make the outlay and invite your contact as your guest.

This is where the strategic part comes in – if you have no interest at all in that sport or branch of the arts, and you work with someone who does, arrange a meeting with your co-worker and your contact, so that another connection is made, and then ask (very politely) if it's possible for both you and your co-worker to attend the event. Your request may be declined, but hopefully you now have another piece in the jigsaw. And you may find that your co-worker is in fact the person who can potentially be one of your touch points for XYZ organisation.

If your contact generously agrees to invite both of you, do your homework. You can't fake passion for a sport or activity in which you have absolutely no interest, but if your co-worker has the passion, then you should be able to develop at least a passing interest. Your co-worker can give you the heads up on the rules or the basics of the genre prior to the event, and then it's up to you to get involved on the day. I often think of one of my favourite films, *In Pursuit of Happyness*, starring Will Smith, and how he missed out on a major account through attending a ball game, but made great contacts anyway. In the film, the potential XYZ identified himself as a non-prospect, but he liked Will anyway, and connected him with his mates.

**What do you know about the potential decision maker/s?**

You need to find out as much as you can about their sponsorships, any awards they support, or have won, any strategic alliances that they have in the industry, charities they support, and any corporate social responsibility initiatives in which they may be participating.

Your folder should be bulging with clippings and pieces of important information as you build your knowledge. And don't forget your internal network. Ask questions at group meetings. "Does anyone know JA and BB, decision makers at XYZ, or do you know anyone who works at XYZ?" Google and other Internet search engines can also be a great help here. Again, make sure you collect key pieces of information. Remember, you may only get one shot at this potential client, so you want to make sure you are well-prepared for that meeting.

**Who is their current service provider?**

You need to know the name of your competitor, how long they have been servicing XYZ, and the products and services they provide. What is different about your product/service? Be honest – is their product better than yours? If so, what can you offer XYZ that your competitor cannot? If they are contracted to provide their products or services, when does the contract expire and the tendering process for the next contract period commence? Again, place all this information in your folder (manual or electronic) as you continue to build a case to win their business.

*Think like the client, not like the potential service provider.*

If you were XYZ, what would make you consider changing service providers? Often, price is not the sole determining factor in supplier-related decisions. Think more strategically about what you have to offer.

### **Is there any way you can refer business to XYZ in the short or long term?**

The law of reciprocity states that what you give out comes back ten-fold, so if you are able to refer other business to XYZ prior to approaching them for their business, you will immediately stand out from your competitors. They will appreciate that you are genuine in assisting them to grow their business, and not just expecting them to grow yours.

*Forensic networkers are creative thinkers.*

### **Do you know anyone who already has a strategic alliance with XYZ?**

How well do you know them? Can you arrange a phone meeting, or catch up with them face-to-face to ask for help. “We are wanting to supply XYZ, and we know that they are a customer of yours. If you were in our position, what would you do?” As with point 3 above, you may need to do some work to find out who the key contacts are, to assist with your strategic targeting.



**Are any of your current advocates and A-class clients current service providers to XYZ?**

If you don't know, ask the question. Referrals are often to be found sitting in your own back yard – you just have to keep your eyes and ears open and do your research. If you have an advocate who is already supplying XYZ, that's a great link. The advocate already knows how good you are, can certainly give you a testimonial, and possibly organise an invitation to an event where XYZ will be represented, or an introduction at an appropriate time.

**How many people do you know within XYZ company?**

Make a list of the names of any people you know in XYZ and grade them into A, B or C contacts. Store their number in your phone directory, and make sure you connect with them once a month. Ask your internal network if they know anyone at XYZ, and apply the same ranking process. You may find that you have some overlap with your connections. If you then ask your network how they know their contacts in XYZ, you gain a lot more information to add to your original profile.

Flipcharts or mind maps are a great way to display all these connections. I often think of a whiteboard in a detective's office when all these names and connections are placed in the one spot. Now your jigsaw puzzle is really taking shape. If you don't know anyone at all in the key decision-making positions, find out who holds those positions. Then, if you drill down, you may find that you do indeed have connections. It is no longer six degrees of separation – it's more like two degrees of separation these days, so you are likely to be pleasantly surprised.

### **How much effort are you prepared to commit to this XYZ project?**

As a rule of thumb, the bigger the client, the more effort is required to secure that client. You might get really lucky, for example you are with a bank, and they are having a particularly bad banking day when you happen to call. They welcome your offer to sort out their problem, and swing their banking business your way as a result. More likely though, is the scenario whereby little issues with an incumbent supplier keep building up until one day one more little thing proves to be the tipping point, enabling you to jump in as their next supplier. This will only happen if you have made the effort over that period to stay top of mind, so that when push comes to shove, you're the one they call.

## **Part two – Is All About You.**

I encourage you to ask yourself these questions:

### **Why do you want to become a supplier or service provider to XYZ?**

Is this a short or long-term prospect? Is there prestige attached to being a service provider? Is it all about bonuses, targets and sales? Do you genuinely want to assist XYZ in building their business with your product or service? When the going gets tough, and you seem to be taking one step forward and three steps back, you really need to be clear on the WHY.

### **How much time can you commit to the XYZ project?**

There are a finite number of hours in the week, and no doubt you will have plenty of other things to do in addition to studying XYZ, so you need to be clear on the commitment that you are able to make in terms of time, and obtain agreement from your colleagues on this allocation of your time. For example, XYZ's decision maker may be a keen yachtsman who enjoys regular Wednesday afternoon twilight sailing with his friends and business associates, followed by a barbecue and drinks back at the clubhouse. While you may think that twilight sailing on Wednesday afternoons is a strategic networking opportunity, be sure to get agreement from your peers, or they may become very resentful. Even keeping abreast of the daily news can take up to 30 minutes each day. Where can you find that time – or will it be stolen minutes here and there throughout the day?

### **What is your project XYZ plan?**

Be clear on your time frame, possible resources that will be required and other staff who will need to be involved. Without an action plan, it can be very easy to give up when you encounter challenges, and end up drowning in a sea of newspaper clippings and documents.

### **Who can you include in your project from both your internal and external networks?**

Create a list of names and contact details. When you approach them, be very clear on how much time you are asking them to commit. Maybe you just need their okay to discuss your progress with them from time to time. Consider how you can use the phone, text messaging and emails to make it as

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convenient as possible for them. And of course you need to respect their decision if they decline your invitation. It is far better for them to politely decline than to agree initially, and then prove to be a no-show at the bulk of your meetings, or difficult to contact, or of little or no value in terms of their contribution.

### **What might you have to give up along the way to make time for project XYZ?**

Maybe you can squeeze this project into your current daily schedule, but be warned – forensic networking can take up a lot of time, particularly in the early stages when you are collecting the majority of the background information. One of the keys to success is finding ways to combine your networking with your interests, for example sailing, running, gym sessions, cultural interests, etc. If you can do this, you will find that not only are you a lot more passionate about project XYZ, but also you can devote a whole lot more time to the project, content in the knowledge that you will still be pursuing your leisure interests.



**EFFORT = TIME + MONEY + ENERGY = RESULTS**

### **Remember: some people are non-prospects**

The sooner you realise this the better – for everyone concerned. Forensic networking will provide the answer to the question “Could XYZ potentially be a non-prospect?” This could be due to any number of reasons, such as a strong sense of loyalty to their current supplier, a long-standing

gentlemen's agreement, or a less-than-obvious connection somewhere in the supply chain.

A quick story – I have a wonderful web designer who has created many websites for me over the last 15 years. He is patient, speaks in everyday language, is up with the trends that work and those that are faulty when it comes to generating web traffic, is affordable, and always does a great job for anyone I refer to him. I was recently at a business networking breakfast presentation with at least five web designers, one of whom approached me at the start of the function and told me all the things he could do to improve my websites. And even though I told him – repeatedly – that I was a non-prospect, he just didn't get it. He went on and on about what he wanted to do, and what it would cost. Now I have no doubt that he may have some new ideas, and he could be very good at what he does, but I am loyal to many of my valued suppliers, especially my web designer. I want to work with people who I know are professional, affordable, deliver on time, are prepared to tell you if you are about to waste money on something that won't work, are up to speed on emerging trends in the marketplace, and which of those are overnight wonders and which of them are the real deal. And, most importantly, will always do a great job for the people you refer to them. They call it loyalty, and fortunately, there is still a lot of loyalty in the marketplace today.

When, in the course of your forensic research, you find out who XYZ's current provider is, a critical question to ask is "How long have they been supplying XYZ?" If it's more than 10 years, they may have a serious case of loyalty happening, and

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are potentially a non-prospect. Of course, if you never ask the question, the answer is always no, but don't be disheartened if you are defeated by loyalty. It may mean you need to re-double your efforts to prove your worth. Maybe some of your forensic networking time needs to be allocated to researching what you would have to do to get all your current clients to be advocates! Bear in mind, too, that if your research reveals that they are changing suppliers every six months or so, warning bells should be ringing. You need to find out why they are changing suppliers so frequently, to ensure that you don't become the next in a long line of disillusioned hopefuls.

One final question you need to ask yourself:

**What would I do if I knew that I could not fail?**

And then, when you have answered the question, you need to go out and do it.

### **Forensic Networking Takes Time And Effort**

Sometimes, it's only when you finally get that XYZ client that the work really starts. However your research will help you to build your connections with XYZ's key players, and as you nurture those contacts, you will continue to build your internal XYZ web, making it stronger and stronger every month.

You will stand out from your competitors, because you are trying to build XYZ's company as well as your own. Where possible you should:

- Provide them with regular referrals.
- Invite them to networking events where they can meet potential clients.
- Connect them with some of your current advocates for mutual connections.
- Keep clear lines of communication happening.
- Make sure it is you that they keep seeing, rather than any associates you may be offloading their work to – this is important. Maybe you can't always make the time for face-to-face contact, but working your database and regularly sending clients snippets of relevant information by text, email or snail mail keeps you in their face. In time your associate will win their trust just as you have, but it takes time.
- Exceed their expectations with the service you provide. They expect great, so aim to exceed great – every time.
- If you ever stuff up, fix it immediately, no questions asked – and if possible, offer compensation. They will remember your response long after they've forgotten about the hiccup.

Another quick story to finish – I recently gave a presentation to a large organisation which has more than 20,000 Australian employees. There were 90 people in the room for this particular presentation and, based on the feedback I received from the audience, the session was very well received. I provided complimentary high-quality 12-page handouts so

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they had something to take away with them, gave out prizes of books for audience participation, and spent the entire day at their exhibition, of which my presentation was just one component, so that I had lots of really up-to-date information and could tie in links to previous speakers. In short, I invested a lot of time, money and effort in the presentation to make sure it really hit the mark and achieved the outcomes the client had identified during our briefing.

At the end of my presentation, we did a lucky book prize draw for the written evaluations, thereby ensuring that everyone did indeed write an evaluation. I sat with the client going through these evaluations, and the final tally was 86 excellent, 3 very goods and 1 good – there’s always one person you don’t reach! I was understandably very happy with the evaluations, and asked the client if she had any further comments. I should mention here that I was wearing a three-piece suit with some sparkly silver shoes, an outfit that I have worn many times and for which I have always received compliments.

*“Those shoes are definitely not corporate, Robyn. I suggest you don’t wear them for our next session in Sydney next week. They’re not appropriate. And you repeated that networking phrase twice during the one hour session. You probably need only make the point once.”*

To say I was surprised was an understatement. I thanked her for her feedback and excused myself to catch a taxi to the airport. I let her shoe comment bug me for a day or two, telling everyone I came in contact with about it, and about the fact that she didn’t even say my presentation was good, even



though 86 other people thought it was excellent. But then, when I started to write this chapter, I realised that big clients have big expectations.



That's why they pay you a large fee. It is a given that you will do an above average job. This client was no different to the one I described at the start of the chapter, who put the pressure on with talk of months of work training 600 people if I did well, and lots of meals featuring beans on toast if I didn't. You have to exceed their expectations – every time. And Forensic Networking gives you the tools you need to do just that.

*“Actively pursuing a personal network and building strategic alliances is a valuable approach, regardless of where you live, and it is never too late. You may have lived in the same town for the last twenty years, but there are still people you need to know, and people who need to know you”.*

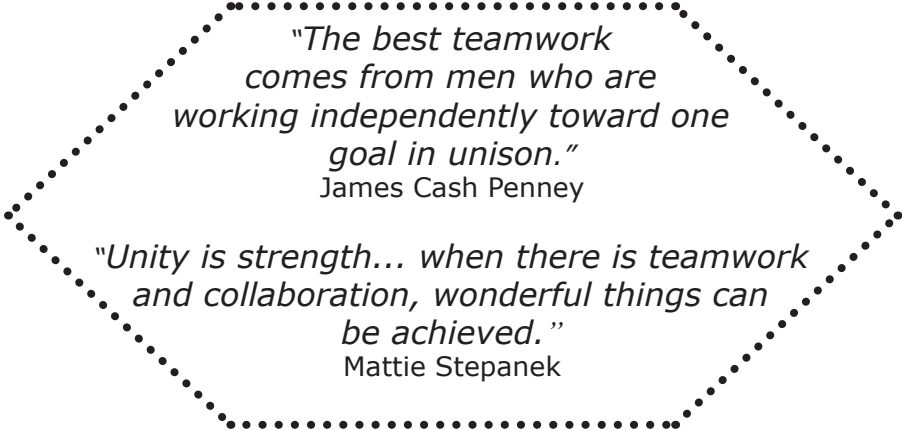
*Neen James*

# Informal Strategic Alliances

## Chapter Five

## Informal Strategic Alliances

The following two quotes more than adequately describe my personal philosophy on the benefits of forming Informal Strategic Alliances:



*"The best teamwork  
comes from men who are  
working independently toward one  
goal in unison."*  
James Cash Penney

*"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork  
and collaboration, wonderful things can  
be achieved."*  
Mattie Stepanek

Long before written agreements and contracts came into being, informal strategic alliances (ISAs) were often made with a simple handshake. As many of these alliances were forged out of trust, integrity and mutual respect, they regularly lasted for many years, and often for a lifetime.

I believe that little has changed since ancient times, and that informal strategic alliances are alive and thriving in today's chaotic and ruthless business world. So what exactly is an informal strategic alliance?

An informal strategic alliance is a mutually beneficial alliance based on both parties displaying loyalty, trust, integrity,

generosity, and a willingness to serve others, without a formal agreement being in place.

Why use ISAs? Most business people and entrepreneurs love their independence, and prefer to stay that way. ISAs offer a great way to grow your business without losing your independence.

People who operate small businesses are often faced with a scarcity of resources such as time, capital and, especially, skilled staff. It makes sense therefore to consider combining with other like-minded individuals to form a powerful alliance, preferably without the formal legal and contractual obligations that can cause more problems than they solve.

ISAs are the most effective way to do business, and represent the ultimate in networking. They enable you to pool your strengths, address your weaknesses, offer a wider range of products and services, share customer bases and pool your resources and information to help you achieve your objectives. Why continue to act alone, competing against each other in the same markets, when you can form an ISA and become much more competitive against national and multinational companies.

One of the great things about networking is that you can do it any time, and anywhere. Everyone you meet is a potential client, a potential supplier, or a potential partner in an informal strategic alliance. Thanks to networking, I have been successful in obtaining new positions and promotions when I was an employee, I have been successful in growing several

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small businesses for other entrepreneurs, and I am now on my third business of my own, which is being built purely on referrals from networking events.

I attend a mixture of professional associations, professional networking events, social events, charity events, sporting events, seminars and lunches on a regular basis. It's much cheaper than advertising, easier than cold calling, and of course a whole lot more fun. Perhaps I could plan which networking events I should attend much better than I do, but I've found that I tend to go where I am attracted by what the speaker has to say, or where I have been referred by a third-party who has recommended a particular event.

Consistency is the key. I know many new networkers believe that they should get instant results from attending just one event, and on rare occasions, that does indeed happen. To be a truly successful networker though, you need to commit to a networking group for at least a year, and be prepared to become a member, attend events regularly, join the committee, and help out in any way that you can. Once people realise that you are there for the long term, are reliable, and prepared to contribute, you will start to get referrals on a regular basis, not only from people who attend those particular events, but also from their clients, and from their clients' clients.

The biggest mistake new networkers make is going to an event and floating around from one group of people to another in an attempt to pass out their business cards to everyone in the room. A week later, they wonder why no one has contacted them, and conclude that networking is too time-consuming

and doesn't work. Surprisingly, the worst offenders in my experience have been professional salespeople. They are relying on getting business by doing the numbers, as they are taught when they are introduced to cold calling. What they fail to understand is that networking is about the quality of relationships, not the quantity.

One of my favourite networking events is a social poker game with some long-term clients of mine who are now great friends. There's a core group of six of us, and occasionally we invite a couple of guests. We have been meeting every six weeks or so for the last five years now to drink, play cards, watch sports, enjoy each other's company, and basically have a bloody good time!

The group includes a Chief Operating Officer, a Payroll Manager, a Human Resources Manager, an Administration Manager and a Credit Manager, and I make around fifty thousand dollars per annum on average from leads and referrals that they provide. No wonder I love what I do!

**Be Memorable, Not Average!**

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.....  
*“Scorn mediocrity. Embrace excellence.”*

H. Jackson Brown Jr

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How many times have you arrived at a networking function only to find there are six financial planners, four solicitors, three cleaners and two mortgage brokers? How do you decide which ones you will do business with, who will give you the

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most referrals from their client base and who you in turn will refer to your clients as a reliable supplier?

I usually end up dealing with the one who stands out the most. Although I may have received business cards from most of them, I pick the one I find easiest to remember. My IT person is a good case in point. At the time, there were several IT people trying to get my business, but Marcel stood out. He has a heavy Swiss accent, a good sense of humour, and his company is called Country Consulting, which was the clincher, because I come from the country. He has looked after my IT needs for the past four years now, and I have referred him to many of my customers, because he provides great customer service and is very reliable.

Everybody has something about them that is unique, and that they can utilise as a marketing tool to promote themselves and their services when they are networking. It is often something very simple – the memorable thing about Marcel is his accent, which truly reflects who he is. For me, his company name doesn't hurt, either.

I learned this lesson very early in life, and have never forgotten it. When I was five, I started primary school in a country area on the North Island of New Zealand. It was seen as a tough school, where most of the kids went around bare-footed, even in sub-zero frosts. In fact the kids were so tough they put their own milk out to curdle and ate dog biscuits for morning tea. Armed guards with Dobermans walked the school perimeter, and that was just to keep the teachers in. Just kidding! I may be exaggerating just a little, but it was indeed a tough school.



At the end of the year we had a fancy dress party, and all the students came dressed as their favourite character. There was Superman, Batman, Spiderman, policemen, firemen, sailors, pirates, cowboys, Indians, gangsters, and soldiers. I would have been more than pleased to be any one of these exciting characters, but it was not to be. To this day I'm not sure what possessed my mother to come up with my costume, an extremely cute pink bunny outfit. Surprisingly, not one person teased me. I guess they thought I must be real tough to wear a costume like that, but I felt extremely humiliated, and it was a chapter of my early life that I would prefer to forget.

Moving forward some six years, I started at intermediate school in another district. Unfortunately, at morning tea on the first day, I ran into a gang of bullies who were looking for some entertainment, and I was it. Just as they were about to beat the living daylight out of me, one of them suddenly said, "Don't I know you? You're the kid who wore the pink bunny suit to our fancy dress party." He then told the other guys that if I was that tough, they would be better off leaving me alone, and the gang looked after me for the rest of the year. I ended up being very grateful to my mother for making my costume unique, something that no one would ever forget.

Networking is about selling yourself to others by building strong relationships and a positive image that is easily remembered. Over the years I have had several symbols that represent who I am, what I stand for, and the services that I provide. I have used 'Orakau', which is my middle name, I have used 'Radar', because I don't miss anything, and for a number of years I was known as 'The 5 percent man', because

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that was the fee people paid me for introducing them to others with whom they could do business.

More recently, I have become known as ‘The Persuader’, and my symbol is a baseball bat. Some would say that this overcompensates for the pink bunny suit, but I prefer to think that it represents a powerful marketing tool that ensures people never forget who I am, and what I do. The bat immediately grabs people’s full attention, and I am then able to get my message across effectively. Sometimes it creates controversy, which means that even more people get to hear about The Persuader and his baseball bat!

I invite you to start thinking about what makes you unique, and that can be used in your networking efforts so that people will easily remember who you are and what you do.

The same principle applies to the formation of ISAs. You want the relationship to say something that is unique, and will attract business from both partners’ client bases. Informal strategic alliances are the logical next step beyond regular networking. ISAs can be formed with businesses that complement what you already do, or with a business that is the total opposite of your existing operation.

An example of this is an alliance that we are currently looking to form with a spiritual healer. She is seeking entry to the corporate market, treating staff who are in pain from sitting at a desk and staring at a computer for between eight and twelve hours every day. We are looking to combine that with my workshop on depression in the workplace, and though

we are only in the initial planning stages, several clients have expressed interest in having us run combined sessions for their staff.

Interestingly enough, I have formed several successful alliances with direct competitors on short-term projects. They are usually with individuals who believe in the abundance theory – that there is more than enough business for everyone when you are prepared to do whatever it takes to provide exceptional service to your clients. An example of this is my recruitment business, where we have started to fill positions by forming alliances with competitors whom we trust and respect.

This has mostly come about because of the severe shortage of candidates in our industry, however surprisingly it has provided us with the opportunity to expand into other departments of our major clients, areas that we would not normally deal with. The unwritten rule is that you do not steal clients from an ISA partner. I now have more than twenty ISAs in place with other recruiters, which means I have access to more than 100,000 candidates instead of 15,000, and so far we have not had any clients stolen. I also have a number of ISAs with trainers who have expertise in areas that complement the training I provide. For example, I work with Sharon Hudson from Training Interventions. She trains my clients on Extended DISC user training, and I train her clients on improving sales performance using Extended DISC. This saves both of us time, effort and expense by not having to market the same product individually. Mark Coburn from Superself is able to fill in for me if for any reason I am unable to run a scheduled workshop. In turn, I cover for Mark when required, and occasionally we

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run workshops together to save each of us from having to do everything, which provides a nice change of pace and is a lot of fun. When my corporate clients tell me they need a business coach, I organise the details and Mark does the coaching. This means that I can service all of my clients' needs effectively without having to be an expert on everything.

You can be very creative in leveraging off your ISAs. I have several accountancy firms as clients for whom I provide recruitment services. They are aware that I also have a training company, and that one of the workshops I run is on cash management. As cash management skills are essential to their small to medium size clients, but they do not have time to deliver the training themselves, they buy my one-day workshops at a very economical rate and offer them to their clients for free as part of their client care program. Their clients appreciate the gesture and give them more work, and I sell my workshops without having to market them. Everyone wins.

I have recently entered into an ISA with a law firm, selling some of their debt collection services. Many of my clients are Credit Managers who can benefit from this service, and so when I meet with them I can talk about recruitment, training, and debt collection services. In turn, this particular law firm has an excellent business development manager who sells my recruitment and training services along with their debt collection services. Again, everyone wins.

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## **Listening is the most important aspect of Networking!**

“Listening, not imitation,  
may be the sincerest form of flattery.”  
Dr Joyce Brothers

As you are probably aware, there are two types of people. There are those who use the left brain, and are normally analytical, structured, practical, and only interested in the facts. Then there are the right brain people, who are creative, flexible, idealistic, and hold strong beliefs.

Under the Extended DISC model, there are four basic behavioural styles and ways of communicating. A ‘D Type’ is someone who has vision, is entrepreneurial, ambitious, self-driven, impatient, results-oriented, decisive, competitive, and aggressive. Many business owners, CEOs and Managing Directors fall into this category.

An ‘I Type’ is a person who is friendly impressionable, expressive, lively, sociable, always optimistic, extremely talkative, spontaneous, energetic, enthusiastic, and very people-oriented. Most of the great networkers, recruiters and salespeople I know fall into this group. They are often referred to as influencers, and can talk under water if you let them.

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An 'S Type' is someone who we refer to as a supporter. They are easy-going, consistent, unpretentious, helpful, dependable, and true team players. These lovely people often go unnoticed, and yet are what I would describe as the foundation stones of any organisation or networking event. They get on well with everyone.

A 'C Type' is someone who is precise, analytical, critical, systematic, dots the 'i's and crosses the 't's, and often appears not to like people. Solicitors, accountants, bookkeepers, doctors, and bankers usually fall into this category.

When attending networking events you often attract people who are similar to or have the same interests as yourself. Initially, this made it easier for me to build rapport quickly and develop strong business relationships which I have maintained over many years. However, I quickly learned that the decision-makers, especially in large organisations, often had the opposite personality to me, and little or none of the same interests. I tried a variety of ways of leading into what I thought were interesting and beneficial conversational topics, but invariably failed dismally in my attempts to engage these people. Rather than give up, and stick to dealing with people with whom I could easily identify, I decided to try a strategy that I used to use when I was dating. When I came across a young lady who I was interested in, but who paid me little attention, I always found that the best strategy was to listen to her, hanging on her every word, and to act as if she was the only person in the room. The results were phenomenal, and I got to go out with some amazing ladies, my wife Sharyn being the best of them.

I found that by applying the same principles to networking, I achieved similar results, and ended up developing rapport and strong relationships with decision-makers that I had not been able to connect with previously. I discovered that many of them found it difficult to network. Because they were task-oriented rather than people-oriented, small talk bored them to tears. Simply asking them about what they did, and how important their role was to their business, gave them the opportunity to speak about their passion, their expertise, and what they felt they contributed to their particular company. In the early days, I assumed that dealing with task-oriented people meant that the relationship would only ever be about business, but once again I was wrong. I've developed many strong friendships with people who only a few years ago I thought I had nothing in common with, and would never be able to relate to, let alone enjoy each other's company.

One of the principles I now abide by is that regardless of who I meet at a networking event, regardless of whether I feel I will get business from that person or not, and regardless of whether my initial feeling is that this person is boring, I pay 110% attention to them. I only speak to ask open questions, and then I listen to that person as if they are the only person in the room.

Many people are unsure about how to network, when to network, who to target, and how to make small talk.

There are many experts on networking, and each of them has some wonderful and practical ideas to help you go about it. By reading books on networking you will pick up a host of tips that

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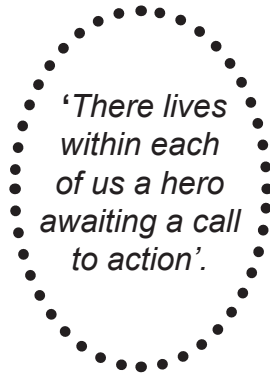
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will assist you, but at the end of the day you need to pick out the things that resonate with your unique style, and formulate a strategy that works for you.

These are my three main strategies, and I use them because I am most comfortable with them. Please feel free to test them, use them, and adopt them if you too find them suitable.

Finally, in the words of H. Jackson Brown Jr,



I now call you to action! Go out and network, and form your own successful informal strategic alliances today!



# How to Escape Your Career Rut

## Chapter Six

## **How To Escape Your Career Rut and network your way to your next promotion or career move**

People often wait for others to take them to their next career move, but smart networkers don't wait to be taken – they take themselves. Sometimes they need to forge a new, previously untried path to secure a career move, however once they have mastered that move, they are more than happy to show others where the path is, and how to follow it. Reports show that more than 80 percent of jobs are filled through word-of-mouth referral, rather than being advertised. In this chapter, we will look at a variety of systems to improve your career advancement opportunities, as well as ideas about becoming more strategic in managing your career.

Many readers will be able to identify with the frustrating experience of being passed over when an opportunity has arisen in the workplace. You may have worked with someone who was not as educated, skilled, experienced or as knowledgeable as you were, nor as good a communicator, and yet somehow they got promoted over you, leaving you totally disillusioned with the organisation and, sometimes, even your choice of career. The old model of people being promoted on the basis of length of service, and moving up the ladder as a reward for their loyalty to the organisation, no longer applies. This is truly a dinosaur in terms of career management models.

Today, employers are looking for multi-talented individuals, indeed from reading many of the employment advertisements that are published in various media every day, it sometimes appears that they are seeking Superman or Superwoman – which is probably not quite the image you have of yourself.

Let's hear from Johnny/Jane Negative Networker, who is drifting along in a job that no longer meets his or her needs:

*“Better the one I know than the one I don't. I might have to drag myself out of bed every day to come to work, and I know that my productivity is well below average, but at least I can do this job. I may not be happy, and I'm certainly not fulfilled, but I have a job, and it's comfortable. If I keep my head down, and get enough sales/orders to meet targets, I can use up my holidays and sick leave and hang on for another year or two. I saw Bill last week. He went for that job with XYZ, and he got it! I was really annoyed that they didn't even advertise it. If they had, I might have gone for it as well. Bill said he heard about it at one of those industry functions that we're all supposed to attend, but I never go to those. They're always held out of hours, and I don't get paid for attending, so why should I go? Bill said he got a \$30,000 pay increase, and a potential international posting. I'm as good as Bill, as a matter of fact I always did better than him at university – it's just not fair!”*

Do you know any Johnny or Jane Negative Networkers? It's so easy to slip into that type of mindset, and unconsciously create a very negative, toxic environment in the workplace, where people seem to moan and groan all day, everything is an effort, and productivity is well below average, let alone

what is possible. This ultimately leads to increased pressure from management for improved results, which creates more resentment, more absenteeism, and more negativity – and so the cycle continues.

If this sounds like your workplace, it's time to do something about it. Leaving is an option, but it's certainly not the only option. Let's look at some career management strategies to ensure you don't fall into the same trap as Johnny or Jane, and become a Negative Networker.

### **Allocate some career planning time**

Ideally, this will be free time, when you switch off the phones and email access, and find a quiet place where you can relax. An investment of two hours in this activity will be time well spent.

### **Create a master life plan**

List short-term (this week, month, year) as well as long-term (five year, ten year, fifteen year) action steps. Be realistic, but at the same time optimistic. In this chapter, we are focusing specifically on networking your way to your next career move. The reality is, that may be an upwards, downwards or sideways move, depending on our age, health, family commitments, ability to study, degree of commitment to the community or the environment, etc. If we remain focused on the bigger picture of our life plan, our job is just one element of that plan, an enabler.

We all have different needs, desires and aspirations, and so the right job for us may be one that enables us to:

- Generate sufficient income to enable us to achieve the other goals in our master life plan
- Achieve financial security, and meet our commitments each month
- Combine our interests with our work – that really is a fun job!
- Apply the skills and knowledge we have learned and mastered
- Give back to the community or environment in some way
- Spend quality time with our family and friends
- Stretch us beyond our comfort zone and extend our knowledge and skills.

Take a few minutes to visualise and then represent your dream job on paper. Use an A3 page, and be as specific as possible. You may simply use words, or you may prefer to draw pictures or use images, newspaper clippings, and photos from magazines or travel brochures. You may even decide to compose a song – use whatever makes your career goals come to life. Incidentally, if you haven't seen the movie *In Pursuit of Happyness*, starring Will Smith, you really should see it. This is one of the most inspiring films I have seen in a long time. It's a true story, and without giving the plot away, the main character was certainly tested in his attempts to achieve his dream job!

### **Complete a personal skills audit**

Ask yourself a few direct questions about your short and long-term career plans. These may include:

- What am I good at?
- What do I like and dislike about my current role?
- What would I like to keep doing?
- What would I like to stop doing?
- What would I like to start doing?
- What skills do I have that I am not using in my current role, and that I would like to use?
- What needs improvement?
- What, specifically, would improve the situation in my current workplace?
- What could I change if I wanted to?
- What am I prepared to change?
- How much energy (time, money or effort) can I invest in this change?
- How soon will I take action?
- What would my perfect job look like – where would it be located, what hours would be involved, what salary would I receive, and what outcomes would I produce?

Maybe you think your employer doesn't pay you enough. Imagine for a minute if your salary was increased by, say, \$25,000. Would your job become any more pleasurable – not just bearable, but pleasurable? Job satisfaction is so important – you must enjoy what you are doing, every day. A pay increase may provide a short-term fix, but within weeks or months, the dissatisfaction and resentment returns. If you don't like your job, do your boss and fellow workers a favour and start looking for a new one!

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*Stop thinking like an employee  
and start thinking like an employer –  
if you were an employer, why would you employ you?*

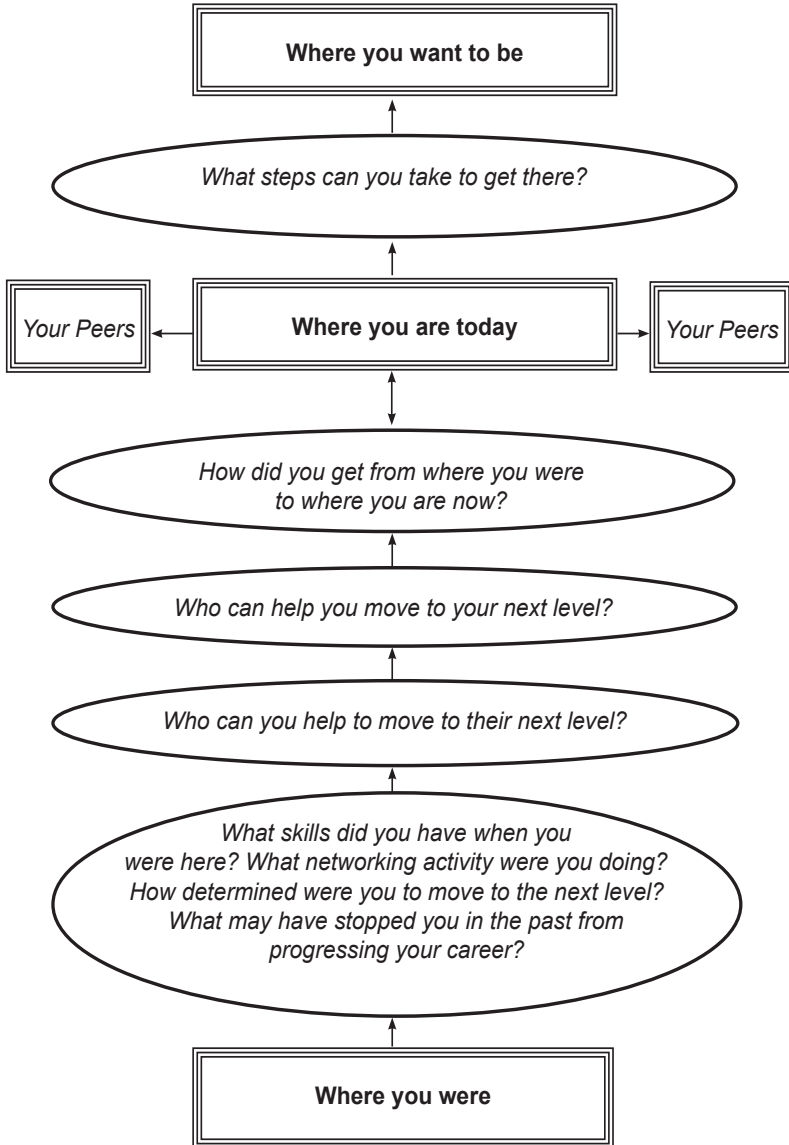
If your perfect job that you identified in the personal skills audit above was available, what would you be able to offer to that potential employer and, more importantly, what would you be prepared to do to get the job? Now I am not suggesting for a moment that you need to consider robbing a bank, or undertaking any other illegal or unethical activity, however when we complete a personal skills audit we sometimes find that we have a skills deficit. Once this is identified, we can then decide whether to pursue training in the skills required, in order to master and consolidate the necessary skill set, or to seek an alternative role that does not require those particular skills.

*Remember, we  
are not our jobs.*

*If we take away the title on  
our business card, we still have  
worth. Our job is 1/7<sup>th</sup> of our life – we  
just spend a lot of time doing it. That's  
why we have to make sure the one we are  
doing is the right one for us!*

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### **Upgrade your resumé**

If you are in the market for a new job, you should be doing this at least two or three times a year. Chances are though, if you are stuck in a career rut, it probably hasn't been done for quite some time. If you are unsure how to present your resumé, it's worth paying a professional resumé writer to polish what you have written so that you are presented in the best possible light. Create both a short and long version of your CV – in today's time-poor world, many people will only want to read a condensed summary, but some employers will also want to peruse the full version.

.....  
: *Invest one hour per day for twelve weeks* :  
: *on your career management strategy* :  
: .....  
.....

### **Invest seven hours per week for twelve weeks on your career management strategy**

You're probably thinking that no one has seven hours to spare each week, but try turning the television/DVD player off for a week to see how much time you are wasting on what is often mind-numbing viewing. If you want to improve or change your career, it's not going to happen without commitment and effort on your part.

**EFFORT = TIME + MONEY + ENERGY**

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Diarise exactly when you will commit to your CM – Career Management – time over the next three months. Some of it may in fact be able to be done during your work day. Here are some ideas to consider when planning your CM activity:

### **Get to know the people with whom you work**

Find out what they do outside of work, what their interests are, what their previous jobs were, etc. Don't be shocked if they express surprise at your new level of interest – you've probably been ignoring them for quite a while now.

Now the skeptics may be thinking, "Why be nice to the people you work with? They can't help me to get a new job." Trust me, if you have been difficult to work with for some time, they may be happy to see the back of you. Aim to have a quality conversation with one person in the workplace every day. The length of this conversation is not important – the value lies in the fact that you have taken the trouble to make a heart to heart connection with them, listening with your heart as well as your ears. People need to know that you are listening to them attentively, not just pretending to listen.

### **Invite a co-worker in another area or location to share a coffee or lunch with you**

It's important to make this a win/win for both of you. Yes, you want to ask for their confidential advice on how you can achieve your career goals, but it must be a two-way conversation. Be sure to ask "How can I help you?" during the meeting, and commit to doing whatever you can to reciprocate. Offer to pay for their lunch/coffee – they may or may not accept your offer, but they will appreciate it. There's nothing

worse than attending one of these meetings and providing lots of valuable information while your meal or coffee is going cold, only to be told that you owe the recipient of your wisdom five dollars because you had the fresh fruit juice while they only had water.

Don't laugh, this happens! Immediately following the meeting, send a quick email or text thank you message – it will be appreciated. It's also important that you keep them in the loop regarding your progress. That doesn't mean reporting in every single day with an update, however you should send them a quick update every fortnight or month to let them know that you have applied for that course, read that book or spoken to that mutual contact they recommended.

### **Subscribe to online employment sites, and purchase the Saturday newspaper in your region**

Even though, as noted in the introduction, 80 percent of jobs aren't even advertised, this is traditionally the day when the employment section is largest. Carefully read through each advertisement that interests you, and make a note of the skills that are required for these positions. Don't be surprised if the same skill deficit starts to emerge repeatedly. This will signal the need to acquire or gain experience in those skills if you wish to obtain one of these jobs. Add that task to your career action plan.

Now, don't panic. I'm not about to suggest that you apply for every position that you like the look of. However, I do recommend that you apply for one or two positions each week. I suggest you treat your job search as, hopefully, a short-term

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project, because it may take 3 to 6 months for you to find your new position. Remember, you don't just want ANY job, you want the RIGHT job for your next career move.

Let's say you apply for one position every week. That may only result in one interview each month, and some of those interviews may be for positions that are not exactly what you are looking for. If you are fortunate enough to obtain an interview, only to find that the job is not what you were after, be upfront about that during the interview. Time is valuable, and the employer or recruitment firm will appreciate your honesty. It is also possible that they have misrepresented the position in their advertisement, possibly unintentionally, in which case they need to be told, politely but firmly.

Always send a thank you note following your interview. An email is fine if they are making a decision within 24 hours, but a hand-written thank you note sends a very positive message to potential employers.

If you are fortunate enough to receive a phone call advising that you have missed out on the job (as opposed to being advised by email or in writing), take the opportunity to obtain some constructive feedback by asking them to suggest one thing you could do to make yourself more suitable for a similar position. You have absolutely nothing to lose by asking – the worst that can happen is that they have nothing to suggest, but a tip, no matter how small, could make a big difference to your next interview.

*Ask for help before you need it.*

## Testimonials

The point of testimonials is to enhance your reputation. You may look great on paper, but a potential employer wants to know that you can interact with others, and what others actually think of you. Make a list of people who you think would be prepared to give you a strong testimonial. Think outside the box – yes, you may be looking for a new job, but the fact that you’re the captain of your local touch football team shows leadership skills. Don’t forget the assistance you gave to the fund raising project at your son’s primary school – a community project with specific outcomes. If you are involved with any environmental, cultural, religious or special interest groups, don’t be afraid to ask people in those organisations for a written testimonial. If they feel uncomfortable giving one, that’s fine – simply go to the next person on your list.

*Never, never, never  
write fake testimonials or qualifications – ever!*

The six degrees of separation rule has shrunk in recent times. It is now two degrees of separation, and bad news travels very fast. Be warned – emails, mobile phones, text messages and websites can be used to destroy a reputation in seconds.

There was a recent report about a graduate who had his job offer withdrawn when the HR department cross-checked his name on [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) and found him bragging about his sexual conquests and drug taking – not quite the image the firm was looking for!

### **Manage Your Reputation**

Your good name and reputation is everything. If there have been brushes with the law, government agencies or authorities in the past – sort them out now. Again, seek testimonial letters from witnesses providing support for your situation or circumstances at that time. Most employers are prepared to give potential recruits a chance if they are told the truth. Hiding a colorful past may mean that you constantly work in fear of someone exposing your secrets. Come clean, and ask to be given a chance to prove your worth.

### **Invest In The Business Of Your Career**

Start seeing your career as your own personal business, and make a commitment to invest appropriate time and effort into that business. Employers are paying you to do your job, be reliable, and act professionally, and hopefully you are committed to the cause. However, it is no longer sufficient to just do enough to ‘get by’. Everyone can ‘get by’ – but the people who get ahead today are often the great networkers. Now I am not suggesting for a minute that you need to be the first to arrive at the office and the last to leave every day – that

will only serve to ensure that you reduce your life expectancy dramatically. The culture of the organisation generally sets expectations in relation to work hours, and this should be discussed at the interview. While you are investing in your business, you also need to consider work/life balance, and ensure that you leave sufficient time to 'have a life'. If the potential employers' expectations regarding work hours don't equate to your potential work hours commitment, don't accept the job. You will not survive, let alone enjoy, the inevitable enormous pressure to conform.

Some of the ways in which you can become a more appreciated employee are to:

- Always behave in a professional manner – even when others are not. That may mean not overindulging at Friday evening drinks, or not gossiping and spreading malicious rumours about fellow workers, or continuing to work even when the boss is not around. Always remember that, in or out of the workplace, you are the face of the firm. Regardless of the division or area you work in, you are representing the firm at all times.
  
- Always complete what you start. Gain a reputation as a completer – someone who can be relied upon to complete projects on time and on budget. And if you know the deadline is looking shaky, speak up long before the due date.

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- Be constructive with your criticism. Anyone can complain – that’s easy. What is generally harder is to come up with a better system, document it, and create better ways of getting things done, saving money, the environment, electricity, water, or resources. Find ways to make things work better, rather than complaining about what is not working.
  
- Show up regularly for both internal and external events. Sure, it’s an effort, and sometimes, after a long day, it’s the last thing you want to do, however, management is usually well represented, and your presence is likely to be noticed. Having made the effort to attend, be friendly, and talk to that new guy from accounts – he might just turn out to be a great contact for you, but even if he doesn’t, no big deal – act like the host. Remember when you were the new kid in town, and how awkward that felt?
  
- Become a connector. Master networkers are really good at connecting people. Someone mentions that they’re looking for a babysitter this weekend, and the master networker recalls a conversation with Sue from HR who said that her daughter is studying and is looking for babysitting opportunities. The key to becoming a connector is that the giving or sharing of information must be totally unconditional – you genuinely do not want anything in return from either party. Not everyone is comfortable with this universal law of giving without expectation, and yet it is one of the easiest and least expensive networking habits you can develop. If you



don't think you have a great memory, write down pieces of trivia as you hear them. You will be surprised how quickly you get to use or share that information.

- Strive to be considered a sphere of influence – someone who knows a little bit about a lot of things, and a lot about one or two areas. Spheres of influence are usually well liked, respected in their field, have normally spent considerable time perfecting one or more areas of skill, are very friendly, helpful, and live with a general philosophy that there is an abundance of opportunities. Whether in relation to career, business, social, or community issues, there are always opportunities for everyone. You will know when you meet a sphere of influence, because they are very good at finding out (through questioning) what you are looking for and assisting you to find it (if they can). And if they can't, they normally connect you with someone who can.
  
- Show up at industry and association networking events. This is part of your career building strategy. The more visible you are, the more opportunities you will create. It would be totally unethical to expect your current employer to pay for your attendance at an event that you were intending to use as a job prospecting opportunity. To ensure that does not happen, pay for your attendance yourself, and create a business card with non-work contact details. Whenever you introduce yourself to someone, you can say, "I work for XYZ at present, and I am looking to move into the ZZZ area, so I'm here out of personal interest rather than as a

representative of XYZ. If you were in my position, who do you think I should talk to tonight?"

*Develop a network of connectors and spheres of influence – ask for help and be prepared to help others along the way.*

### **Summary For Fast Tracking Your Career Opportunities**

By now, some readers might be thinking “Wow, all this proactive networking at my present job to enable me to get a new job sounds like a lot of hard work”. Yes, if you’re thinking like an employee you might well be thinking that, however by now you should have realised that successful career management is about thinking like an employer. In order to achieve any significant career growth, you need to think like the boss of your own business! Here’s a summary of the steps you need to take:

- Decide where you want to go, ensuring that your career is just one part of your master life plan. Do you want to work with a small professional team, be an industry leader, build global connections? Do you want to work full time, part time, casually, long hours, short hours, set hours, flexible hours, seasonally – be as specific as possible.

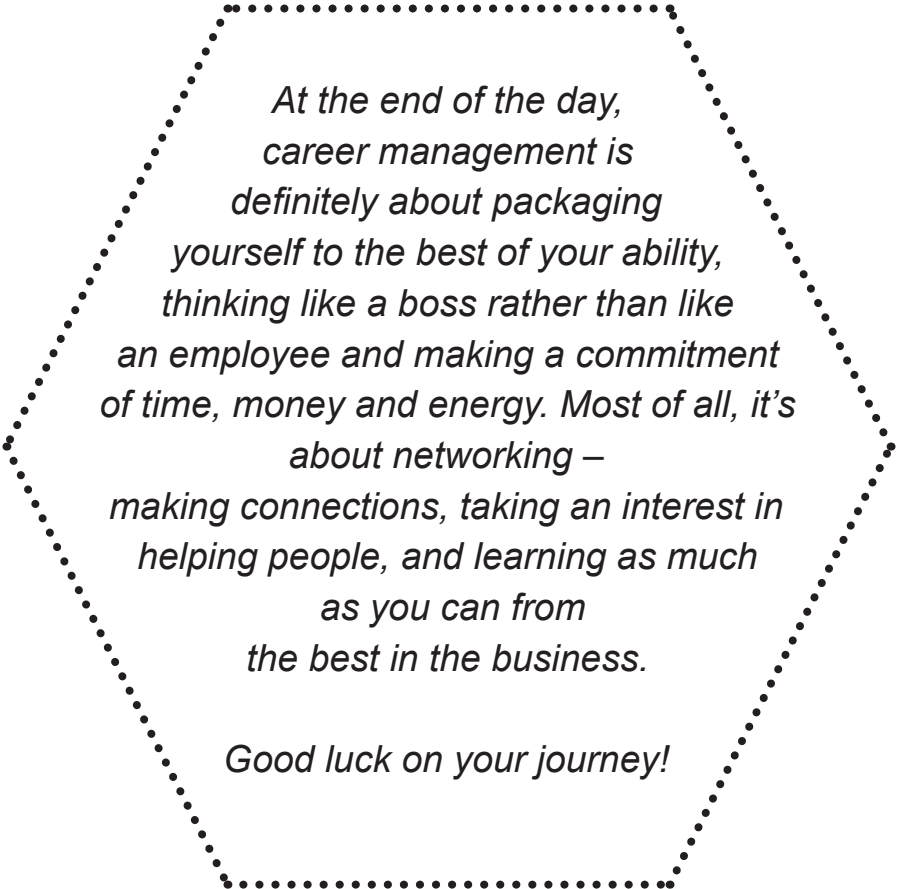
- Identify any skill shortages that may prevent you from securing your dream role, and create an action plan to attain those skills.
- Make a commitment – of time, finances, energy and effort. One hour per day of career building time for twelve weeks will dramatically improve your chances of getting to where you want to go.
- Ask for help before you need it. Collect testimonials from a cross section of the various areas of your life. Prepare two questions regarding your desired career move, and ask for advice from senior managers/partners, connections, and mentors. Don't waste their time. If you don't intend to implement their ideas, don't arrange to meet with them in the first place. And always thank them in writing for their advice.
- Manage your reputation. Treat your career as if it was your own small business.
- Become a connector. Give information, ideas, assistance and referrals without expecting anything in return.
- Develop a network of connectors and spheres of influence – people who know a little bit about a lot of things, and a lot about one or two areas. Be prepared to help others, particularly those people in your organisation who are where you used to be.

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- Don't take rejection personally. Think of life as being one big jigsaw puzzle, and every day another little piece of the puzzle becomes clearer. Sometimes we are rejected for what we consider to be our dream job, only to find that the true dream job was a week or month away. Trust that the right job is out there somewhere, waiting for you – you just have to find it.
  
- Show up at industry and professional events. Be seen, get known, and move ahead.
  
- Celebrate your successes along the way. Learn from every application, interview, and follow-up phone call – everything that forms part of your career management plan. Small, regular improvements will have a cumulative effect, until eventually, you secure that dream job. And then, being the master networker that you will have become, be sure to look behind you and see who you can share your experiences with, and help to take the next step on their career path.



*At the end of the day,  
career management is  
definitely about packaging  
yourself to the best of your ability,  
thinking like a boss rather than like  
an employee and making a commitment  
of time, money and energy. Most of all, it's  
about networking –  
making connections, taking an interest in  
helping people, and learning as much  
as you can from  
the best in the business.*

*Good luck on your journey!*

# Cultivate Your Cultural Awareness

## Chapter Seven

## **Cultivate Your Cultural Awareness: Some Observations on Australian and American Cultures**

Although Aussies and Americans speak the same language, there are several important cultural differences that you need to be aware of, and several strategies you can apply, in order to quickly establish a valuable network when you move from one country to the other.

### **Don't assume understanding**

Americans are incredibly polite, and if they don't understand something you've said (either a term, or maybe your pronunciation) they won't ask you to explain. If you notice that you have lost someone in conversation, take the time to explain what you mean. Remember, Aussies tend to speak very quickly, and our language is characterised by numerous slang words and phrases, which may seem cute or funny, but can sometimes prove difficult to translate.

### **Watch the weather**

In several parts of the United States, the weather has a huge bearing on daily activities. On the East Coast everyone hibernates in winter, spending a lot of time at home in front of the fire, with minimal socialising. No doubt this has a lot to do with the amount of snow and ice that is on the ground. In spring, these neighbourhoods come to life with outdoor projects, activities and many social events beginning again; there is real excitement in the air. Summer brings plenty of

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long, hot days and school is out for three months, so many people enjoy travelling and holidaying in other parts of the country. It is not unusual for networks to stop meeting over the summer months. Fall (autumn) is a very busy time of year, with people returning from vacation and beginning new projects and business activities. Networks start up again, and people busy themselves getting as much done as possible before the winter cold returns.

In Australia, where the seasons are reversed, many businesses slow down or even close down during December and January, which is the Aussie summer. School is out, and people take their holidays, enjoy Christmas and New Year celebrations, and generally take it easy. In the speaking industry, I was always aware of the need to earn twelve months worth of income in ten months, as most organisations weren't interested in holding large corporate events in December or January. Be aware of the weather wherever you live, and how it affects people's moods, activities and productivity levels.

### **Lending a helping hand**

Americans all want to help you. If you do something to help them, they feel obliged to return the favour, and constantly want to make sure they are doing everything they can to support you. While Aussies also want to help each other out, they especially love helping the 'battler', the person who has been given a raw deal, or is doing it tough. Americans, in contrast, need to feel that you are their equal in all transactions.



### **The outlook is positive**

Aussies are blessed with good weather and great food, and are known internationally as friendly, open people. Wherever I have travelled in the United States, and in Europe, Aussies are always welcomed, especially in the States. Americans have a very positive outlook on life. They believe in 'the American Dream' that anyone can make it here, no matter where they are from, and that if you believe it, you can achieve it. Their positive outlook is contagious.

### **Funny you should say that**

Americans and Aussies have a very different sense of humour. Aussies tend to have a very self-deprecating sense of humour, which can puzzle Americans, who see this as 'putting themselves down'. I found myself explaining to one of my American neighbours that the reason I used such self-deprecating humour was because I was so confident, which seemed like a contradiction to them.

### **The state of business**

Each state within the US has a different feel, energy, accent, foods and way of doing business. Moving between various States within the US can be like travelling to another country. My observation of Pennsylvania (especially the Greater Philadelphia area) is that people are born here, go away to college, and then return to raise their families and build their careers. Many people within this area have lived their entire lives here, and know everyone. To outsiders, Philadelphia could appear to be a very 'closed' town, but that wasn't my experience. I found people to be generous and open – but maybe that was because I'm an Aussie!

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My good friend Camille Valvo (an American living in Oz) reminded me recently that Aussie states also have their own unique personalities, and she is right. Growing up in Queensland and then relocating to New South Wales for work, I discovered that the two states had a different feel, pace, energy, foods and ways of doing business.

### **Open all hours**

Doing business in the United States means being prepared to attend meetings at any time, breakfast, lunch or dinner. It is not unusual for people to meet on weekends for business, which was a shift for me. People do not think twice about calling on Sundays, and expect others to be in their office (or at least in work mode). Their strong work ethic (which is instilled in their children from an early age) means that Americans are comfortable doing business at all hours. For many children, the school day begins at 7.30 am, which means being ready for the bus by 7.00 am. Most Australian schools don't start until 8.45 - 9.00 am. This could be part of the reason why Americans have such a strong work ethic – they start young. Americans love the easygoing Aussie lifestyle, which is why many of them love to holiday there.

### **Coffee please**

The US seems to be switched on 24/7 – you only need to observe their coffee routines. They've all got a Starbucks Cup in their hands, their cars are designed with drink holders for their morning commute, and they wouldn't leave home without their stainless steel coffee holder (many people bring these one-litre containers to every meeting, gym class or social occasion). I knew I had finally become a local when I bought

my own Starbucks stainless steel coffee holder (but I fill it with my own espresso coffee – good coffee is hard to find in the US, especially if you have been spoilt by the wonderful Italian-style espresso available at any good café in Australia).

### **Time to eat**

In Australia, it is not unusual to meet for dinner around 8.00 – 8.30 pm, so I was fascinated to discover that when we moved to the US, people were inviting us to join them for dinner at 5.30 pm. It seemed like the middle of the afternoon for me. Many people prefer to eat early (which is probably healthier), meaning that many business dinners in the States begin (and end) a lot earlier than would be the case in Oz.

### **Would you like prayers with that?**

Growing up in Australia, it was unacceptable to talk about politics or religion at the dinner table. These were two subjects that were considered taboo in most situations. Consequently, when I arrived in the States, I was surprised to discover how open people are with their political views, and how freely people discuss religion. In Australia, people don't care whether you go to church, and they don't care who you vote for, not because they are apathetic, but because these things are considered to be private matters that don't need to be discussed. In the United States, on the other hand, people have very strong views, and often make assumptions about other people based on their political affiliations. This was fascinating to me.

### **Conspicuous compassion**

Another cultural difference I observed in the US was how active everyone is in charity work. Where I live, there's any number of organisations you can support by volunteering, serving on boards, participating in fund raising, or simply contributing to by making a donation. The area in which I live has a very philanthropic feel about it, so much networking is done at these charity events. It's a great way to meet new people while contributing to your local community. What I notice about Aussies on the other hand is that while they might be passionate about a particular charity and the work they do for that organisation, they don't often talk about it. In the States, you always know who is associated with what organisation through reports, newsletters and press releases which regularly publicise the generosity of donors and supporters. Aussies prefer to keep these things low key.

### **Raise your glasses**

In Australia, most networking events, whether lunch, dinner or otherwise (although thankfully not breakfasts!) often include a beer or a glass of wine, but this is not the case in the US. Drinking alcohol with a meal, other than occasionally with dinner, is not part of doing business in the States. Iced tea is often the drink of choice, or maybe soft drink or water.

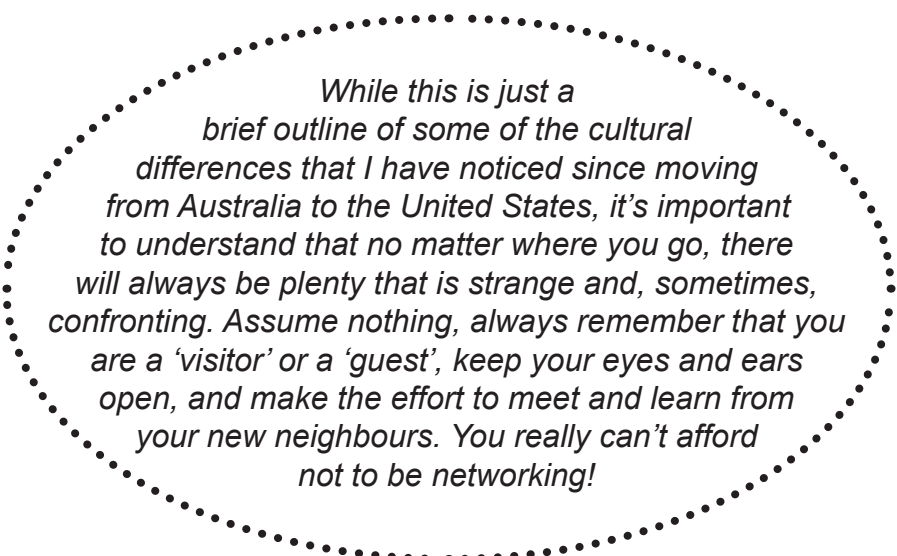
### **Dress for success**

Due to the great weather, it is not unusual to see bare legs in summer in Australia, with casual suits or soft flowing skirts proving popular. Many organisations have a policy of 'casual Fridays' or 'mufti days', which encourages employees to relax in 'smart casual' dress from time to time. In the States, this

would not be acceptable in many industries (nor practical, given the climate), so I feel more comfortable wearing a stylish business suit most of the time.

### **Money matters**

Another interesting contrast is the difference in financial years. In Australia, the financial year ends on June 30, while in the States, it follows the calendar year, ending on December 31. The tax system and deadlines are also very different, which was a big lesson for me in our first year here as I scurried around trying to make sense of processes and meet unexpected deadlines that were very new to me.



*While this is just a brief outline of some of the cultural differences that I have noticed since moving from Australia to the United States, it's important to understand that no matter where you go, there will always be plenty that is strange and, sometimes, confronting. Assume nothing, always remember that you are a 'visitor' or a 'guest', keep your eyes and ears open, and make the effort to meet and learn from your new neighbours. You really can't afford not to be networking!*

# Virtual Networking

## Chapter Eight

## **Virtual Networking**

### **It's not what you know, it's who knows what you know**

Picture yourself in a boardroom in Sydney with eight other women, all looking at a pair of television screens. On one screen is a picture of the boardroom in which you are sitting, while on the other screen, there is a picture of a similar boardroom in Toronto, Canada where another ten women are set to do business internationally. Wow – the joys of technology!

“Would you like to be part of a virtual trade mission between Canada and Australia?” Never one to miss an opportunity, when I was asked this question, I didn't hesitate to say yes, but then I paused for a moment and wondered – what's a virtual trade mission? Boy, was I in for a steep learning curve.

#### **Background**

A very innovative group of women based in Canada had set up a trade mission with the support of a group of sponsors, including the Royal Bank of Canada, Austrade, Westpac Banking Corporation, Industry Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and International Trade Canada. Meanwhile, the former national manager of Westpac Women in Business, Amanda Ellis, had formed a core group of women in Sydney to facilitate trade with women in Canada. I was fortunate enough to be invited to participate in this core group.

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There was one important difference with these trade groups however – rather than travelling half-way around the world to meet, this was going to be a virtual trade mission.

Our first task was to register our electronic profile online. Once registered, we became part of a Yahoo list serve, which was a great way to communicate with each other online, prior to the main event. The next step was the virtual trade mission itself. The Australian Technology Park in Sydney featured state-of-the-art video conferencing equipment, and so this was chosen as the venue for our inaugural Virtual Trade Mission.

### **Major networking opportunity**

After the formal introductions and welcomes, we took turns describing our businesses, and what we were wanting help with from our overseas counterparts. Without exception, each request, both from Canada and Australia, was met with an immediate response of, “You need to speak with XYZ”, or “I have a friend who will know someone in that field”, or the “ZYX website will give you the answers you’re looking for.” Each of the women were either connected with a potential strategic alliance, or directed to where an ally could be sourced, even though we had businesses as diverse as heart valve producers, compost bin manufacturers and film makers.

In all my years of networking, this was definitely one of the most powerful demonstrations of the old adage “It’s not what you know, it’s who knows what you know”, and it got me thinking how powerful it would be if, on a daily basis, we actually asked for help with the things we needed, rather than trying to solve things ourselves. In less than 90 minutes, 19



people literally had doors open for them in other countries, purely by being succinct and direct with their requests for help. The final step was, of course, taking action and following up with those leads.

I was asked to give a brief outline of the points that I thought were absolutely critical to ensure the maximisation of the potential benefits of any strategic alliance. You may like to consider the following points in relation to alliances you are considering:

- Be specific – the more information you give, the easier you make it for people to help you.
- Be prepared to start small and prove your worth to a potential client, prospect or ally.
- There may be differences in language/customs. Assume nothing and clarify everything, otherwise confusion may occur.
- Ask yourself: how much am I prepared to lose or invest in terms of time and money to make this alliance work? And remember, without commitment, you won't get your desired return on investment (ROI).
- Once you form a connection, set specific time frames in relation to what will be done and by whom.

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- Allow for exit clauses. If you have made a connection with a potential client/ally, plan an initial task that needs to be completed within a (realistic) set time frame. If it does not happen by then (and there is no reasonable explanation), then you may consider suggesting possible exit clauses for both parties. When you value your worth, others will too.
- Always work win-win. If it's not win-win, it will not work in the long-term.
- Ask yourself, why am I doing this? Will this opportunity take me one step closer to my goals, or further away? Be clear on your intention, and then make the commitment to make it work for you.
- Aim for quality alliances, not quantity. Establish alliances one at a time. Trying to manage dozens will result in confusion for you and your potential allies.
- Imagine building a bridge. With every alliance we make, the bridge becomes stronger and stronger.

### **Measuring success**

At the conclusion of the 90-minute link up, the virtual trade mission was hailed a huge success in terms of connections made and advice received. The ultimate measure of success however would be how many participants followed up in a timely fashion and maximised the golden opportunities that were presented that day.

**Start your own  
mastermind group**

*Don't wait to be asked to join a virtual trade mission. Start with a mastermind group. Handpick a group of like-minded people, set up a meeting, be clear and specific about your desired outcomes, and wait for the magic to happen.*

*It won't be long before you begin to experience the real power of networking.*

# Creating and Developing Relationships

## Chapter Nine

## Creating And Developing Relationships

Two friends were discussing how strong their friendship was when one of them said, “*You know, you are such a good friend that if I were on a sinking ship and there was only one life jacket, I’d miss you heaps, and think of you often!*”

Even though not all business relationships develop into friendships, I have developed some wonderful friendships through networking, and I have had many business friends ‘throw me a life jacket’ at times. This may have been in the form of a referral, an article or book that changed my outlook, an invitation to a networking event where I met a major new client, or a seminar that changed my life.

When I look at my circle of friends, many of those friendships have originated from business relationships, some going back as much as 20 years. They have blossomed from a simple initial meeting with a total stranger to a valued friendship. As Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson, authors of *Soar with Your Strengths*, observe, “Relationships help us define who we are and what we become.”

Whenever you meet someone at a networking event or business function, you have no way of knowing where this initial contact may lead. Everyone you meet has the potential to teach you something, refer you to someone they know, or ultimately do business with you, although not necessarily in the immediate future. Some things take time. Several years ago, I was referred to an investment company by a

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business acquaintance. I connected with this company, began investing with them, and then five years later, actually began working with them, developing new skills and creating new relationships. Be patient, and allow relationships to develop.

### **Everyone is important**

Many people decide whether or not they will do business with someone within the first few minutes of meeting them, on the basis of their appearance, how they speak, or how they behave. Recently, I met a gentleman named Graham who had attended a networking event and commented that “*There was no-one worthwhile in attendance. It was a total waste of my time.*” EVERYONE is worthwhile. More than likely, Graham did not take the time, or make the effort, to get to know anyone properly. He was probably so focused on what HE wanted to get out of the event that he never bothered to find out anything about the people he was talking to, or their needs. There are many ‘Grahams’ out there.

When you take the time to get to know someone, you generally find out many interesting things about them. I recently met a woman at a networking event whom I discovered did karate. I had just achieved my black belt in taekwondo, so we were able to compare notes on various aspects of different martial arts. Now, whenever we meet, we have something in common to discuss, other than business. Senior executives appreciate an opportunity to talk about their outside interests, rather than just discussing business. Take the time to get to know the *person*. You may be surprised what you have in common.

### **You never know who you will meet**

There are always people who are on their own at networking or business functions, so make the effort to talk to someone you haven't previously met. I always remember a story that was told to me about a man who attended a business event with the sole purpose of meeting a certain high-profile business executive. When he arrived, he found the executive he wanted to meet surrounded by people, and decided that he wouldn't have a chance of meeting her that day. He looked around the room, noticed a woman standing by herself, went over and introduced himself and began talking to her. At one point, he made a comment about the popularity of the business executive. The woman he was talking to asked if he would like to meet the celebrity executive. He replied that yes, he certainly would, but figured that he didn't stand a chance with all those other people around. "*I'm her personal assistant*", said the woman, "*and it would be my pleasure to personally introduce you at the end of the evening.*" Everyone is important, and you never know who you may meet, or where it may lead, when you take the time and make the effort!

### **Networking is about building mutually beneficial relationships**

This doesn't happen overnight. Spend time asking questions, and finding out about THEM. It is during this time that you may find out whether or not you may be able to assist one another. As Stephen Covey says in his widely-acclaimed book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, habit number 5 is to "Seek first to understand, then to be understood".

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You won't build a relationship with everyone you meet, but at least make the effort to find out if it is worth pursuing.

Dale Carnegie once said that *"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."* In his classic book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, he suggested that there are six simple ways to make people like you:

- Become genuinely interested in other people
- Smile
- Remember that a person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound
- Be a good listener – encourage others to talk about themselves
- Talk in terms of the other person's interests
- Make the other person feel important, and do it sincerely.

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

### **Following up**

When you have made a connection with someone, it is imperative that you follow up – certainly within the next 72 hours, but the sooner the better. Write a few notes about them while your memory is still clear. Hopefully you will have asked enough questions and listened sufficiently carefully to their responses to enable you to build a small profile of them, including their business details (their specific roles, the



products or services they provide, etc.) and non-business information (their interests and hobbies, whether they have children, etc).

You need to decide on the most suitable way to follow up. This may depend on the person and their particular role or circumstances, indeed it is something that should be discussed during your initial conversation. People are so inundated by email these days that I find the direct approach, either by phone or a note in the mail, is the most effective way. When was the last time you received a hand-written card or note?

### **Arrange a time to meet**

Give them the opportunity to choose the venue, after all, you are the one who is following them up for a meeting. Confirm the date, time and venue in writing. I learnt this the hard way. I once received a phone call from a woman I had arranged to meet asking where I was. She had been at the agreed meeting place for 20 minutes waiting for me. The problem was, I had the meeting listed in my diary for the following day. Oops! To this day, I still think she was wrong, but the moral of the story is clear!

### **Plan your follow up meeting**

While all the details are still fresh in your mind. Use an outline such as that shown below to record everything you know about the person:

<b>Follow Up Meeting</b>		
Name:		
Phone:		Mobile:
Email:		
Meeting Details		
Date:	Time:	Venue:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What I know about them:</li><li>○ From this meeting I aim to:</li><li>○ How they may be able to help me:</li><li>○ How I may be able to help them:</li><li>○ Literature/brochures/referrals to take:</li><li>○ Other details:</li></ul>		

Often, a meeting may not be able to be arranged for a few weeks, so plan it well in advance. Arrive early, to allow yourself time to relax and get your thoughts together. Go over your notes again, focusing on what you hope to achieve.

Each meeting will be different, and will result in a variety of outcomes. Some meetings may create the opportunity to do business immediately, others may result in several further meetings being arranged before any business can take place, and there are those that may not develop into any business at all in the short term.

### **Staying in touch**

How you remain in contact and develop a relationship with someone will depend largely on whether or not they wish to do business with you and become a customer. Sometimes, they may not do business with you initially, but you both feel that it would be beneficial to stay in touch. Remember, in any worthwhile relationship, both people need to benefit.

Here are a few suggestions on how to stay in touch with the people with whom you wish to maintain a relationship. The first two points relate specifically to customers who have bought your products or services, while the rest apply to everyone in your network, whether they are customers or not:

- Send a card, flowers or a small gift acknowledging that it was a pleasure to do business with them.
- Arrange a follow up meeting and ask for constructive feedback on all aspects of the transaction, from your

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initial approach right through to the delivery of the service or product. I have found that a simple check sheet is useful for this exercise. Learn to handle criticism – use it to develop yourself, rather than letting it discourage you. Assuming the customer is happy, this is a good time to ask for referrals.

- Stay in contact. Ensure you ring them regularly, just to check how things are going, not to ask for business or referrals.
- Remember birthdays and other special events. Most computer systems enable you to highlight specific dates, making it easy to send a card.
- Ask their permission to send your newsletter. Just because you have their details, this does not give you permission to send them your business information unsolicited.
- Scan the newspapers and business magazines. If you know they have a particular interest in something, send them any relevant articles you come across.
- Invite them to special events which you think may interest them.
- Refer business to them. Think abundantly as to how you can assist them.

- Build mutual trust. Constant contact will turn a customer into a client.

You never know when they may need your service or product, or when they may pass referrals to you, so make the effort to stay in touch. In my previous business, my role was to recruit people to sell products through network marketing. About 10 years ago, I met a lovely lady named Lorraine at a presentation who I thought would be great in my team, however at the time, she didn't think she would make a good consultant. I stayed in touch, and invited Lorraine to various company functions. After 18 months, she finally decided that the time was right to join. Lorraine went on to become one of my directors, and we are still friends, although we have both since left that particular company. Lorraine continues to support me by referring customers to my current business.

Spend at least 20 minutes every day 'staying in touch' with your network. This may be in the form of a note, email, phone call, referral, newsletter, invitation or article of interest, and shouldn't always be business related. It is an indication that you are thinking of them, and value them as a person.

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Creating and developing relationships takes time, effort and patience. Think of it as a journey for both of you, as you gradually get to know one another better. Believing in and caring for people usually brings out the best in both parties.

I have many people in my network who have never bought products from me or used my services, but because I have taken the time to develop a relationship with them, they have passed business on to me, and I have done the same for them.

In John C. Maxwell's book, *Winning with People*, he talks about the Garden Principle, which recognises that all relationships need cultivating: "The nature and purpose of the relationship will determine the time and energy needed to cultivate it."

*Networking is all about creating and developing relationships. Treat others the same way you would like to be treated – and then do something that exceeds expectations – and your garden is sure to provide endless pleasure and abundance!*

# Get Connected and Stay Connected

## Chapter Ten

# **Get Connected and Stay Connected: How to Create a New Network by Leveraging Your Existing Network**

Quality networks have no boundaries and no time frames. This became very evident for me when we relocated from Australia to the United States. I quickly learnt that while I needed to establish a network in my new country, I also needed to keep my existing network alive and well.

When you set up a new network in another city, state or country, there are several strategies you can apply to be more productive in both getting and staying connected.

## **Getting Connected**

### **Connect with others**

When you move to a new location, seek out others who share your sense of humour, understanding of language, and love of similar foods. You will soon discover that the locals enjoy introducing you to other Aussies. When I first moved to the USA, as soon as I heard an Aussie accent, I would introduce myself, and if I heard someone say they knew an Aussie, I would ask for an introduction. I went out of my way to make myself known, share resources and connections, and reminisce about 'home' at every opportunity. My local gym was so excited when a new person walked in who 'sounded like Neen' that they told me about her the next time I dropped by. I contacted her that night, invited her to the Australia Day party that we were hosting that weekend, and we have stayed



connected ever since. The owner of my local pizza joint noticed that I was Australian, told me about another couple who had been living here for two years who were also Aussies, and gave me their contact information. We're now close friends. You don't always appreciate how good it is to be with other Aussies until you leave Australia.

### **Create a language list**

Develop a system to capture the differences in words, sayings and slang expressions, and keep it updated. Share this list with Americans who are travelling to Australia, journalists you encounter, and your existing network: many people will find this valuable.

### **Leverage your uniqueness**

There are many ways to stand out other than through your accent, sense of humour and language. Remember, people enjoy hearing about differences. They enjoy learning new words, phrases and explanations, and are invariably fascinated by other cultures. Find ways to express your uniqueness. Since I have been living in the United States, I begin all my email and communications with the greeting 'G'day'. I didn't use this in Australia, because it was so...well, Australian, which is why it is part of my unique point of difference here, and people enjoy it. Similarly, the word 'mate' is not used in the same way in the United States as it is in Australia, which makes it fun to use, and to teach people when and how to use it as well.

### **Australian-made**

Regularly send Australian-made products to clients, friends and colleagues. You might choose calendars and postcards featuring Australian scenery and wildlife, toy kangaroos and koalas, Aussie food (Tim Tams are really popular!), Aboriginal artworks or boomerangs. I purchased a large supply of stickers and novelty items that I use in regular communications with clients. People enjoy receiving parcels containing items they can't purchase in the USA.

### **Ask for introductions**

Ask your original network for introductions to people they know in your new city or country. Prior to moving to the United States, I asked all my Aussie connections to introduce me by email to anyone they knew who they thought would be a good connection for me, and was able to create some great opportunities. Robyn Henderson generously introduced me to her agent in Canada, who has been a big supporter. In turn, I have been able to introduce other Aussies to her. Tell people who you would like to meet, and they will gladly introduce you.

### **Build on brands**

Having worked for clients in Australia with an international profile, I was able to use these brands when building my reputation in my new location. If you have worked with an international brand, ask them to make introductions for you when you are either visiting or moving to another country. You might also like to ask for a written testimonial or introduction on corporate letterhead.

### **Find ways to help**

One of the requirements for authors to be listed on Amazon.com is a United States address or Social Security number. In order to assist Aussie authors wanting to list their books on Amazon.com, I established an account, and use it to get their books listed on this high-profile and popular website. This was a unique way of helping my network of Australian authors to increase their profile and boost their product sales.

## **Staying Connected**

One of the most important things you can do when you relocate to another country is to stay connected to the country you used to call home; the people, the language, and all the things you enjoy about your former home country. There are many ways to do this:

### **Read local news**

My Internet homepage on my laptop is ninemsn.com, and each day I enjoy reading about current events in Australia. It allows me to stay on top of current affairs, and to feel connected. My good friend Camille regularly sends articles from Australian newspapers and journals which I love to read, especially the ones that make me laugh.

### **Find Aussie food providers**

Locate suppliers of your favourite foods, and use them both for your own supply, and as a source of gifts to send to new contacts and clients so they can enjoy tasting traditional fare

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from your home land. You'd be surprised at the difference between Aussie and American chocolate. Sharing this Aussie delicacy with locals will see them converted for life! My American friends and clients look forward to my trips back to Australia now, because I always bring back gifts of Aussie chocolates for them.

### **Phone home**

Stay in regular contact with family, friends and clients. This not only keeps you connected to your network, but allows you to hear a familiar accent. Keep up to date with what is going on in the lives of those you love and whose friendships you value, and stay in touch with your clients' business challenges and successes. My friend Emma and I have a regular phone date on Friday night (or Saturday morning, depending on whose time zone you are considering) which allows us to stay in touch, hear all the news, and remain aware of each other's lives. You need to make something like this a priority.

### **Remote connections**

Technology has allowed us to stay in touch with people, and to connect with others, regardless of where we are located in the world. Depending on the nature of your business or industry, it is entirely possible to retain clients after making your move, but even if you are unable to do this, still keep in touch. They will be interested in what you are learning in your new environment, and will be able to keep you up to date with information that your new clients will in turn find valuable. It is from such connections that wonderful opportunities often arise.

### **Email connections**

Use this tool to connect your new network with your existing network. If you know someone in your new city, state or country who is interested in doing business in your home town, state or country, offer to introduce them to your network via email. I have been privileged to do this for many people, and it has proved very rewarding for all concerned. A friend in Australia recently launched a shoe boutique, and I was able to introduce her to a very accomplished and successful owner of a shoe store chain through another member of my personal network. Although I didn't know the shoe expert personally, my friend did. A simple email to the three parties led to a new and valuable connection for everyone.

### **Become a travel guide**

Volunteer to act as a travel guide for those in your new network. If you know of someone who is visiting your home country, offer to connect them to your network, suggest places to see, restaurants to try, things to buy and give them all the 'inside' information that tourists never get to hear. You will be adding value to your new network, strengthening relationships, and being a great ambassador for your country.

### **Celebrate Australia Day**

Each year we host an Australia Day party in our home for friends, colleagues and clients. We serve Aussie food, wine and beer, and play Aussie music. Our friends all look forward to this event, and we invite any Aussies we know who live within driving distance. It's fun to share some of the traditions and tastes from home, and it's also a great way to boost your profile and reputation in the local community. I recently wrote

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an article for our local newspaper on how Australia Day was similar to America's Independence Day celebrations which resulted in a half-page editorial complete with photographs. It's fun to share your cultural background in this way.

### **Educate others**

Find ways to share your love and knowledge of, and to help others learn about, your country of origin. Volunteer to speak about your home land in schools, at community events and on radio and television programs.

### **Introduce existing connections to new ones**

I have created many opportunities within my total network by connecting Aussies with Americans, and vice versa. When I hear of someone who is visiting the States from Oz, I find out how I can best help them and who they would like to meet, and make any email connections that might help to smooth the way for them. For example when speakers have come to the United States, I have been able to provide forums for them to speak, and have introduced them to other networks, who have also enjoyed hearing from them. Help both networks by constantly searching for ways to connect them to mutual advantage.

### **Use electronic networking tools**

There are now several popular electronic networks in this age of amazing technology. I am a member of Linked In. This is an easy-to-use and very popular way to build a virtual network, which is a valuable tool at the international level.

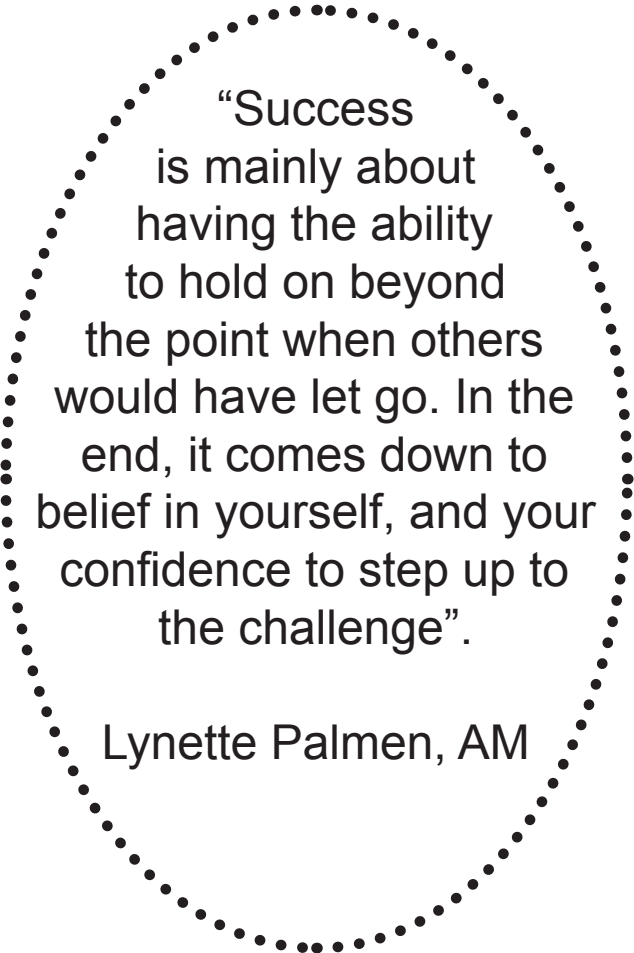
### **Host others**

Where possible, arrange to host visitors from your home country. Whenever I have visitors from Australia, I create an event for them to network and meet others. This might involve a party, a luncheon or a drinks event. They are able to use these events to make connections, and then they can follow up and continue to build relationships when they return home. If there are any networking events in your local area during their visit, take them along with you so they can experience the pleasure of meeting a range of new people, building their network, and creating an international profile and reputation.

### **Watch trends**

Be conscious of what is happening in your industry, and share those trends with your network in your home country. If you think something might be of interest to someone, send the relevant information to them. I occasionally send the Sunday Book Review section and the Best Sellers list from the New York Times to Robyn Henderson at Sea Change Publishing in Australia so she can see what is hot in books in the States. Find a way to gather information that might be useful to your network, and share it with them regularly.

Regardless of where you live in the world, and how far and how often you move, there are many ways to leverage your existing networks while building new ones, and to then create some powerful synergies between them. Always strive to get connected, but never forget to stay connected.



“Success  
is mainly about  
having the ability  
to hold on beyond  
the point when others  
would have let go. In the  
end, it comes down to  
belief in yourself, and your  
confidence to step up to  
the challenge”.

Lynette Palmen, AM

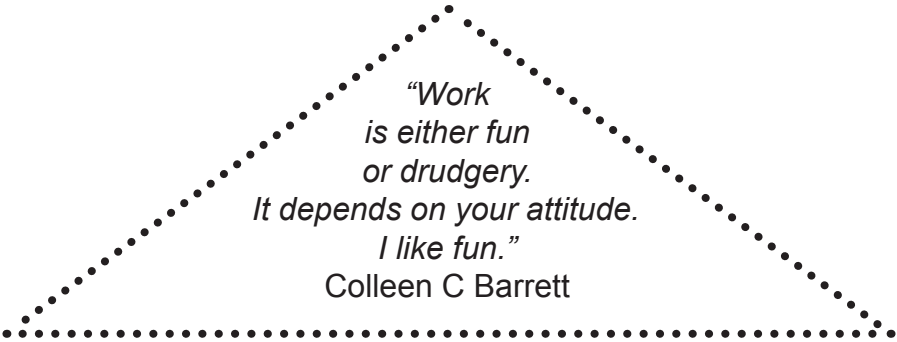


# Successful Informal Strategic Alliances

## Chapter Eleven

## Successful Informal Strategic Alliances

I don't know how many times I have heard businesspeople complain about certain customers. "They never pay on time." "No matter how good a job we do, they'll always whinge about it." "They're always trying to screw us on price." "They don't treat us with respect." Does this sound familiar?



*"Work  
is either fun  
or drudgery.  
It depends on your attitude.  
I like fun."  
Colleen C Barrett*

Here's a new philosophy for you. When I work, I want to have fun, so I only deal with clients I like!

If I don't like the client, I don't deal with them. On the rare occasions when I break this rule, I always pay for it. If they don't value what you do, then why bother having them as a customer?

My goal is to build a customer base that is comprised entirely of The Persuader-friendly companies. This means that they value my services, they like me, they support my business and they are a pleasure to deal with. You've heard of the 80/20 rule? All I do is work with the 20 percent who value

what I do, pay on time, are friendly, and are people with whom I can enjoy long term relationships. I have had some of my clients for more than 20 years now, and I consider them to be much more than a client. I consider them to be friends, supporters and advocates. Some have become mentors who I can regularly consult with and use as sounding boards. They are an integral part of my business. Essentially, what this all means is that I have very few issues in relation to customers, and I love doing what I do because of the special relationships and bonds that I have formed over the years. And the other 80 percent? Well, I let my competitors have them!

So, how do we do this?

I suggest that you begin by looking at what attributes your ideal clients would have. My clients are ethical, easy to deal with, helpful, forgiving, have a good sense of humour, are supportive, and are likeable. The most important thing is that they value my services and value my experience.

Many of the attributes that I look for in an ideal client are those that I looked for in an ideal wife. Choosing potential suppliers or customers is almost as important as choosing your life partner. Unfortunately, many of us make mistakes, and pick the wrong people to do business with.

The process of choosing a customer is very similar to the process you undertake when selecting a friend, or someone you feel has dating, and possibly longer term relationship potential.

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An initial meeting is like a random encounter with someone at a nightclub. They may look attractive, but the lighting is generally poor and the music is invariably loud. We know very little about them, and any liaison may well end up being nothing more than a one night stand, or worse, they may prove to be a nightmare, or a stalker.

However you may see some potential, and agree to meet them again to see if there is any synergy, and to explore whether it is worthwhile continuing the relationship. You may try out each others 'products and services.' If you're impressed, you introduce them to your customers and suppliers, in much the same way you will introduce a new "special person" to family and friends. You start to see each other regularly as the relationship becomes a little more serious. This is similar to a business relationship reaching a stage where it is strong enough to agree to work on business projects together, as I have done with many of the Informal Strategic Alliances (ISAs) I have formed. Once you have started working on business projects consistently, you could consider that as the equivalent to being engaged.

The final step is merging the two businesses, which you can liken to the equivalent of getting married. In business this is far too formal for me, because, as in marriage, if you have chosen the wrong person, it will end in 'divorce' and could possibly be just as expensive and painful.

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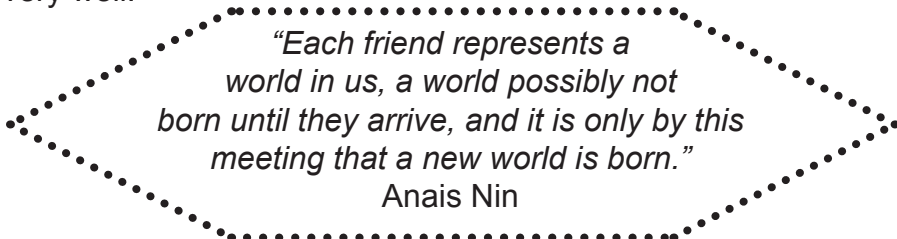
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## The keys to forming successful informal strategic alliances

There are three keys to forming successful ISAs:

First, you must have a mutual respect for each other and really like each other. This means that the bond that you form is strong, because of your integrity and your mutual trust in each other's abilities.

It's been my experience that the most successful ISAs I have formed have been with people I like, and with whom I get on very well.



*“Each friend represents a  
world in us, a world possibly not  
born until they arrive, and it is only by this  
meeting that a new world is born.”*

Anais Nin

Interestingly enough, they may have different personalities, different interests and different perspectives on life, but the one thing that they all have in common is tolerance and respect for others.

You have probably heard the saying “do not to mix business and pleasure!” I believe the total opposite. I only do business with people I like, and I certainly only form ISAs with people I know I can trust, respect, and get on very well with. We need to be able to compromise, listen to perspectives that may be

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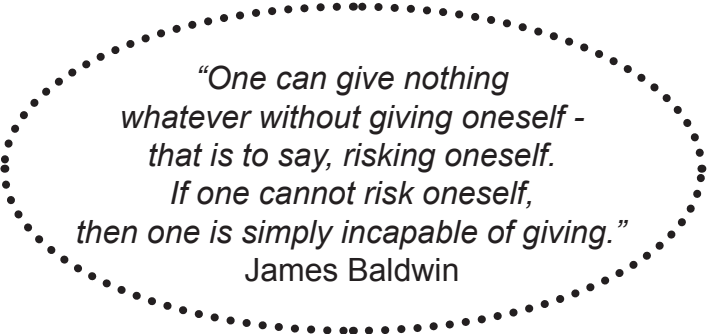
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totally opposite to our own, and have faith that we will succeed in achieving our chosen goals or objectives.

In choosing an ISA partner, I use the same formula that I use to select my customers and suppliers. These days, I find that most of my ISAs are with people who I've known for at least a couple of years and with whom I've worked previously. However when I first started forming ISAs, I used my gut instinct. When I listen to my instincts, they are always right. When I have gone against my instincts, it has usually ended in disaster. Always trust your instincts!

The second key to forming successful ISAs is that all parties need to believe in and understand the law of abundance.



*“One can give nothing  
whatever without giving oneself -  
that is to say, risking oneself.  
If one cannot risk oneself,  
then one is simply incapable of giving.”*  
James Baldwin

It is a risk to give, and those who believe giving is better than receiving firmly believe in the law of abundance, which states that there is more than enough for everyone, and we should only seek win-win situations.

We are bombarded from an early age with the concept that someone must win and someone must lose, which is the biggest limitation to business success today. If you are in business, you have already taken a huge risk. Whether you then choose to enter into an ISA, or into something more formal, there is always a degree of risk attached to each project.

To increase the probability of success, you need to select a partner who is also a giver. If either party cannot enter into an ISA wholeheartedly, with total dedication and commitment to a win-win strategy then you're better off not going into it at all. Each party in the strategic alliance has to be treated as equals so both may win. As soon as one party becomes a taker, the ISA will not work, because according to that party, someone must lose, and it won't be them.

A friend of mine recently entered into an ISA with an interstate competitor. This was done with good intentions, and started well, so much so that it was decided that a formal strategic alliance would be a better arrangement. Unfortunately, as soon as the solicitors and accountants got involved, the good intentions went right out the window. The major partner in the alliance started to treat the minor partner as an employee, rather than as a fellow business owner and partner. They attempted to micromanage the new arrangement, which created conflict and mistrust. If they had stuck to an ISA, both parties could have walked away from it unscathed, but under the legal agreement that had been entered into, the minor party was bound by contractual obligations while the major party had none. This was because the minor party had gone

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into the arrangement with complete trust and commitment, whereas the major party had some reservations, and therefore never fully committed to the project, using the formal contract as protection should anything go wrong. It was almost as if it was predestined not to succeed, purely because of the attitude of the major party.

If you need to formalise an alliance, then please ensure that you have just as many rights and obligations as the other party. If you are unable to obtain satisfactory commitments from the other party, don't sign up. Walk away, and find a more suitable alliance.

The third and final key to creating successful ISAs is the ability to think entrepreneurially and creatively.

.....  
••• *“Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.”* •••  
••• Erich Fromm •••  
.....

Many accountants and solicitors I've met recently have asked for assistance with their marketing, as they have never needed to do it before. These people are often seen as being very conservative, methodical and analytical – and far from being creative or exciting.

As a result of some of my marketing workshops, I have seen accountants and solicitors starting to form ISAs with people who are much more creative, to pursue projects that assist both parties support and grow their respective customer bases. One accountant linked up with a spiritual healer who runs workshops for office workers to improve their posture



and general health in the workplace. The accounting firm had previously run information seminars for their clients focused on business and accounting topics, and now they wanted to provide something of value to their clients that had nothing to do with accounting. The spiritual healer ran a very practical workshop that delivered new customers to the massage side of their business. The accountant's clients appreciated the gesture, and the exercise strengthened their relationship and resulted in more referrals of new business back to the accounting firm.

*Informal strategic alliances can be formed anywhere, any time, and they can be formed with any type of business you care to think of – your success in forming ISAs will be limited only by the extent of your imagination and creativity. Take a risk, think outside the square, and work with people you like and trust. After all, you have to enjoy what you do.*

# How to Network Your Way to Your Next Board Appointment

## Chapter Twelve

## **How To Network Your Way To Your Next Board Appointment**

Why do we continue to see the same names popping up on the boards of our biggest organisations? What do these people know that other people wanting to secure board seats don't know? Is there a shortage of opportunities? You only have to read the business pages of the media to see the highs and lows that board members and chairpersons alike seem to experience with monotonous regularity. One thing's for sure though – in order to become a member of the directors' club, you have to be highly visible, a bold decision maker, prepared to make the tough calls, and willing to endure ongoing public scrutiny.

So, have you got what it takes to sit on a board? Let's look at three key areas that may assist you to secure your first, or next, board appointment:

### **Be prepared to ask for help**

Identify all the people in your network who either are currently on boards, or have held board positions at some point in the last five years. Highlight the names of those people you would feel comfortable calling and asking for a ten-minute phone meeting. Now you might be thinking you would much prefer to take them to lunch or dinner, and have more time to chat in a relaxed setting. Maybe you could offer your contact the choice, but I can assure you it is no fun trying to eat a meal while you are on the receiving end of a barrage of questions. More often than not, the result is cold food and indigestion

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– not exactly a pleasant experience. And in this busy world in which we live, reality is, you are probably not a sufficiently high priority for them to justify an hour or more of their time. If asked courteously however, they will generally be more than happy to give you a few minutes of phone time. Your initial call might be along the lines of, *“Mary, I am keen to get on a board in the not for profit area, and I know you have been on XXX board for some time now. I was wondering if I could arrange a brief phone meeting to ask you three quick questions.”*

When you explain your objectives clearly, you will often receive the answers to your questions on the spot, which saves both of you time. However, if you do indeed have to make an appointment for a phone meeting, don't be surprised if it ends up being postponed once or twice. Remember, this is a priority for you, not for them.

### **Do your homework before your phone meeting**

Be courteous enough to learn as much about this person as possible. Know which boards they are currently on, others they have served on in the past, and any key challenges or issues within the industries with which they are currently involved. It will most likely be considered a serious waste of their time if you haven't bothered to do your research in preparation for the meeting, and may reflect poorly on you in the future, should they ever be asked to provide a reference or testimonial for you. Don't waste their time by asking pointless or irrelevant questions.

### **Be specific with your questioning**

Frame your questions as succinctly as possible. Write them down, and refer to them while you are talking. Take notes, because you are unlikely to remember everything, particularly if you are a little nervous. Be direct and to the point, but avoid confrontation. Remember, they are helping you, and giving freely of their time. Your questions may need to be preceded by a brief summary of your background, indeed you may be able to forward a brief resumé (and possibly a copy of your questions) a day or so before the phone meeting, if they are agreeable. They may not have time to read your information word for word, but they will generally be impressed by your professionalism.

Questions to ask may include:

- How did you obtain your first board appointment?
  
- I am experienced in these areas, and I am keen to get on boards in the YYY area, so what do you suggest I should be doing to increase my chances of being considered?
  
- I have set myself a goal of obtaining XX board appointments during the next YY years. Is there anyone else whom you recommend that I speak to who may be able to offer a different perspective? And may I mention your name when I contact them?
  
- What have you found to be the biggest obstacles to getting on to boards?

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- Are there any downsides to being on a board?
- Other than a financial gain, what specific benefits have you enjoyed?
- If you were me, what would you do in the next 6-12 months to increase my chances of being considered?
- Final question – I am very grateful for your time today. Is there anything at all, in any area of your life, that I could possibly help you with (you'd be surprised how simple their requests can be)?

Always be mindful of the time. If you have asked for ten minutes, it is not your prerogative to extend the meeting. When your time is up, thank them for their help, and always follow up with a hand-written note thanking them for their time, and making reference to one or two points that you will be acting on. Keep them in the loop regarding your progress – this doesn't mean weekly calls, but it doesn't hurt to make contact with an occasional update, perhaps quarterly.

*A wise person once said that your  
Network is your Networth – this certainly applies  
when it comes to board appointments.*

*Happy networking!*

# A Case Study ...

## Women's Network Australia

## Strategic Networking

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*Founder and Managing Director of Women's Network Australia, Lynette Palmen, AM, was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for her service to the community, particularly through promoting public awareness of the existing and emerging issues affecting women and in providing expertise to a range of charitable and not-for-profit organisations. She is a single mother of two children, an entrepreneur and a master networker. In this question and answer segment, Lynette gives us an overview of the original idea behind, and the growth and future of Australia's leading women's network.*

**Women's Network Australia is one of the most successful networks in Australia. When you started it back in 1990, did you ever imagine that it would be the size it is today?**

What started as a simple lunch get-together for four of my business colleagues to network and discuss business ideas, concepts and career path strategies has grown to be what is now known as Women's Network Australia, the nation's premier networking organisation for business and professional women. From those first four women meeting to provide each other with mutually beneficial business support, the organisation has expanded Australia-wide, and currently services the needs of over 40,000 women in business every year. I have always had a passion for assisting businesswomen on their road to success but, to be honest, I never commenced Women's Network Australia with the idea of it being where it is today. I started the organisation based on my needs in business at the time, and I had no idea that thousands of women across the nation felt exactly the same



way. It became apparent very early in the establishment phase that Women's Network Australia was destined to expand under expert management. What had begun as an interest would develop into my life's work. I was, and remain to this day, passionate about women, their potential and their ability to succeed in business. I have had the unique opportunity and privilege to lead, develop and expand an organisation that actually makes a difference in the lives of thousands of women not only nationally, but also globally.

### **To what do you attribute its success?**

Persistence and hard work, along with a driving passion and belief that the services Women's Network Australia has to offer make a real difference to the potential business success of so many women. Women's Network Australia does not carry a good luck charm. The organisation has experienced exactly the same growing pains as any other small business, which is why we are so well positioned to share our business knowledge. The organisation's expertise is not based on theory, it is practical. The tried and true business concepts that have worked so well for Women's Network Australia can be applied to any business, large or small, throughout Australia.

The first five years in any business are generally extremely difficult and challenging, and then beyond that, the ingredients to business success are good leadership and management, ongoing education and listening to and learning from those who know more than you do. I also place a big emphasis on the fact that success is mainly about having the ability to hold on beyond the point when others would have let go. In the end,

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it comes down to belief in yourself, and your confidence to step up to the challenge.

### **What are the biggest mistakes people make when they join Women's Network Australia and start attending events?**

That's easy. Most people have absolutely no idea what networking really means. They arrive thinking it is about them – which is totally not true. Networking and building relationships is about taking the time to meet and find out about others, and from there working out if there is any synergy, or how your services or products could help people in meeting *their* business or personal goals, not yours. Remember, networking is not about you.

Not following up the people you meet after an event is another area which ensures certain failure. If you tell people you are going to call, do it. If you know you have a confidence issue with using the phone, send a hand-written note. Do not leave people hanging. There may be some months where you are so busy that extra business is not a priority. If this is the case when you meet new people, simply say *"It was great to meet you. I would like to find out more about your business, so let's catch up at next month's networking event."* These are really very simple techniques, but they work.

Another barrier to effective networking is attending events based on who the guest speaker is. My tip here is to forget about who is speaking, and whether the subject interests you, and focus on who else will be at the event. Anyway, if you can't

gain at least one tip to take away and implement from even the worst speaker, you need to either re-evaluate how you are judging others or start listening with a more open frame of mind.

Another big networking mistake is to display prejudice against those in the room on the basis of your own agenda. A good example of this would be someone from the big end of town suffering from what I call 'quick fix syndrome'. They walk into a networking event where, on the surface, all attendees appear to be from the small or home-based business sector. They feel they have nothing in common and, worse still, the people in the room are of no use to their business agenda. Networking is completely lost on this type of person and let me tell you, there are far too many of them out there. They have completely missed the fact that every attendee in the room has at least 300 networking contacts, and some could even be the partners of or have close family contacts with key players in the corporate sector. Last but not least, who in the room actually has a database that includes the type of people they want to make contact with?

The facts are, not everyone can see the big picture of networking. If you're not willing to put in the hard yards and build relationships, you will spend most of your time attending numerous networking events in the hope that one day, a person you view as a potential client will be coincidentally placed at your table, hand over their credit card and tell you to run up what you want. I can absolutely guarantee the true personal cost of networking goes well beyond purchasing your ticket to attend an event.

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**You are known as the Queen of Networking in your home town of Brisbane, and sit on boards, advise politicians and feature constantly in the media, plus you are a single mum to two beautiful children. What are three networking habits that keep you sane in this fast-paced world?**

First and foremost, I practice what I preach, but I have also formed certain habits over the years which have now simply become who Lynette Palmen is.

I always have a vast range of beautiful stationery on hand which means writing hand-written notes to my contacts is never a chore. In actual fact, I find it an inspiring part of my day.

I devour newspapers each day, keeping my eye on who is doing what and where they are going so I can have an opinion on everything (which I am never shy about sharing) and be across everything that is going on around me.

I have a unique way of remembering people's names and what their business actually does. This ability comes from my genuine interest in others and what they are aiming to achieve. As I head up the nation's premier networking organisation for business and professional women, this skill has been instrumental in ensuring that Women's Network Australia members are introduced to the right contacts.

I also know that Women's Network Australia is not about me, it's about giving back. The agenda is about networking women, the ignition of trade between our members and ensuring that

all members have access to forums, services and business ideas that can help them to achieve their desired goals.

I love what I do, and I think that simply shines through to everyone I meet. People will always be drawn to those who have a genuine interest in helping them achieve success. The secret is that you have to be authentic and believe in what you are doing. Networking is not a business practice, it's a lifestyle choice.

**Where do you see Lynette Palmen and Women's Network Australia five years from now?**

I will continue to be the Managing Director of Women's Network Australia, the nation's premier networking organisation for business and professional women. With our online services set to expand across all platforms, women in business will benefit from our services, no matter where they are geographically located.

# About our authors ...

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## Beverley Brough



Beverley is a professional speaker, coach, trainer and author on how to master networking. She has 25 years experience teaching, coaching, training, selling and networking. Beverley began her career as a teacher before entering the Direct Sales and Marketing industry. She built a very successful business through networking and achieved the company's top national level. She regularly presented and trained at their National and International conferences.

A highly innovative, inspiring and results oriented professional, Beverley gives companies and individuals practical tools to create unlimited business opportunities through networking. Through her business Master Networking she runs workshops in the public and corporate sectors, coaches businesses and individuals on the skills of networking and presents as a keynote speaker at seminars and conferences.

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### **Robyn Henderson**



Robyn Henderson is a global networking specialist. She delivers more than 120 presentations each year, has spoken in eleven countries to date, and has never needed to advertise her services. All Robyn's work comes from networking, referrals, and through her website.

Robyn's career includes more than 14 years as a professional speaker, 10 years in sales and telemarketing management, and 13 years in hospitality. She is one of only 15 women in Australia and 106 in the world to earn the CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) designation, and is only the third woman to have won the National Speakers Association of Australia's prestigious Nevin Award.

Robyn has authored and/or contributed to 25 books, including 10 on networking and business building, and 3 on self-esteem and confidence building. In 2003, Robyn was appointed Adjunct Professor at the Southern Cross University in Lismore, NSW. In 2004, Robyn launched her latest venture, Sea Change Publishing, and in 2005 opened the imprint's USA office.

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## Neen James



Neen is an International Productivity Expert who helps people to turbo-charge their productivity and performance by looking at how they spend their time and energy – and where they focus their attention.

A dynamic speaker, author and corporate trainer, Neen demonstrates how boosting your productivity can help you achieve amazing things. With her unique voice (and Aussie accent), sense of fun and uncommon common-sense, Neen delivers a powerful lesson in productivity and networking.

Subscribe to Neen's free monthly ezine  
at <http://neenjames.com>



### **Lynette Palmen AM** Founder and Managing Director Women's Network Australia

Seventeen years ago Lynette, Founder and Managing Director of Women's Network Australia, [www.womensnetwork.com.au](http://www.womensnetwork.com.au) gathered a few girlfriends together for lunch with a view to sharing business information and ideas. The Network now services over 40,000 women each year, and has an impressive register of 4,000 business members

increasing daily. It has become the nation's fastest growing membership based organisation for business and professional women.

A strong advocate for working women, Lynette has held the position of Deputy Chair of the Premier's Council for Women advising governments on policy direction. Lynette's agenda also includes a passion for community renewal. She co-chaired the CEO Challenge - Business Against Domestic Violence Initiative for Brisbane's Lord Mayor and sat on the Department of Industrial Relations Work and Family Task Force. Lynette currently serves on a number of Boards and Government Statutory Authorities.

Lynette's business and community work has been recognised by her appointment as a Member of The Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for her service to the community, particularly through promoting public awareness of the existing and emerging issues affecting women and in providing expertise to charitable and not-for-profit organisations.

Lynette spends much of her time travelling across the nation speaking to, for and about women in business and the issues that are important to them and their success in the corporate, small business and home-based sectors. Lynette's business style is bold and upfront and her leadership qualities are inspirational. She is a mentor and role model to thousands of women across Australia.

*To find out more visit [www.womensnetwork.com.au](http://www.womensnetwork.com.au) or call 1800 052476*

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## Steve Semmens



Known as the Prince of Networking, Steve Semmens, The Persuader, is the world's leading expert on Informal Strategic Alliances, or ISAs.

Wielding his trademark baseball bat, he assists small to medium businesses to work smarter by utilising networking as their primary marketing tool, sharing with them how they can work effectively together to be competitive with the big boys!

Steve has a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Human Resources and attends over 200 professional development and networking events each year. He is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Australian Institute of Management. He is also an active member of the Toastmasters CBD Thursday Club and the Society of Business Communicators Queensland, and is on the Queensland Leadership Team of the National Speakers Association of Australia.

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