



BOOK ONE

HOW TO EXPAND YOUR INFLUENCE THROUGH THE ART OF NETWORKING

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WHY THIS BOOK

You have a vision for changing the world. You want to find a new job, or maybe you are just eager to have people show up to a worthy event. You want others to know about your new business, or you want community leaders to understand a crucial issue facing your town. Perhaps you have a new candidate you are excited to promote for the next election, a meeting you want someone to attend, or you just want to get to know more people.

But, how do you do it?

How do you meet the right people, get them to listen to you, spread the word, or initiate conversation? You need to network. I'm going to help you understand how.

Networking is Important

I have been networking for 16 years and counting. My network now expands all across the nation and even into international realms. It includes lawyers, church leaders, business owners, political strategists, statewide organizational leaders, homeschool moms, medical professionals. I call friends those who serve in elected office, service club leaders, Law Enforcement members, media personalities, retired military, professors, former college Presidents, just to name a few.

I love networking. But even more so, I love impacting the world with good. Networking expands my ability to do that and more.

To do networking well, you need to learn how to put yourself in the best position to be connected to others. How do you get to the place where you are the one being connected, vs seeking the connections, to someone else? And how do you orchestrate connecting and networking in such a way to value the human and get what you need? Did you know that you can accomplish it all easily with honor, grace, and long term purpose? It's true.

There are some fundamental principles when it comes to networking. We will explore them in this book, including some of the basics:

- What is networking?
- Why does networking matter?
- What is the most important part of networking?
- How do you start networking?
- How do you build upon your current relationships?
- How do you put your best foot forward?
- How much time does it take?
- And more

If you are a CEO, a new developing business, or perhaps a church leader and it really is not your thing to network, after you review this material you will now know what to look for in a business partner or your next hire. You will also get a sense of what excellence looks like in networking. Even if your team is doing the connecting for you and acting on your behalf, make sure that they are aiming for the highest standard possible. You want to be certain your brand is being represented to others in the most honorable way.

If it's not you who is doing the networking, your team needs someone who is eagerly and consistently cultivating relationships, bringing new valuable people into your circles. You need someone on your team who is always looking for new connections: a people multiplier!

A Greater Purpose

I am hoping that your eyes are about to be opened to how much potential for influence is hidden deep within you. Networking is more than just a value proposition, or a task to do, so that you can get a new job, or make the next big dollar.

Networking is like the ongoing adventure that will lead you to potential discoveries, solutions, or life changing encounters. The skill of networking is pregnant with possibility. With each new human connection you make, you are one step closer to bringing good into someone's life or finding solutions, or even a new friend that will make your life all the better.

Our world is full of trouble, needs, misery and what feels like endless problems. But when you start networking on the foundation that your life has a purpose, that you are here in this world for a greater mission than just to make your bank account bigger, and you realize that together we are better than operating alone, you see networking full of incredible potential. The art of networking is a skill and an art worth developing.

To me, the world is not a “problem” to avoid but it is an adventure to embrace. Solutions are within reach but we will get to them faster when we work together and with the right partners. These individuals will be some of the people you may meet through networking.

I am confident that some version of the world - whether it's a few neighbors next door, or an international network of experts - are in need of the message, passion, and “thing” you have to deliver and share. By growing your network, and circle of people you know you will be able to impact and influence more people for good.

If you have been asking yourself one of these questions, then this material is for you:

- How do I network with the right people?
- How do I distribute my info to the people who need it?
- How do I get my resume or project in front of the people who might be interested
- How do I let people know about what I am doing?
- How do I maximize opportunities?
- What is the most effective way to network?
- How do I bring people together for a big event, cause, or gathering?
- How do I network in a way that is honoring to them, and useful for me?
- How do I convey an important message so others will listen?

By going through this process with you, I cannot guarantee that people will show up to your event, that they will hire you for their next big gig, or that they will buy your product (i.e. you can do all the right things but some people are just not interested in the growing process of brussel sprouts, or they may not want to know how to tie dye their old wedding dress).

But I can set you up for success: I can help you know how to try and give it your best shot to get connected to the right good people who will help you get to the next stage in your journey! I can help you understand the why behind networking, and I can help paint a picture for you of what can become due to networking endeavors.

However, your success is going to be driven, in large part, by one primary thing. You. The fruit of your efforts is based on your mindset and attitude regarding networking. And it will also be influenced by your behavior in the networking process, your actions and follow up choices. These you can develop.

One more thing before we start: I believe in you.

While I may not know you, I have a hunch that you are a great person and the goodness you want to help bring to others is something the world needs. When you network well, you are on your way to building a movement. If you take this seriously, your world will never be the same.

YOU ARE AN INFLUENCER

Let's get something straight about you.

Friend, you are already an influencer. You are someone that people want to connect with, whether you know it yet or not. It doesn't matter if you don't have a master's degree, college degree, or GED. You don't have to look perfect, drive a nice car, or be a leader in the community. You - as an individual, as a human - have intrinsic value. Period. And people need to meet you!

Your life has a great purpose, you are valuable, and you can fill a niche that no one else in the market is able to tackle. You know way more people than you even realize. People respect you. (It's true!) They want to know what matters to you. Many people need to meet you and need to connect with the people you can bring to them.

Accept this as truth: many of them are waiting for the resource you are about to offer them.

Other people, who you may or may not yet know yet, are looking for you. You are a piece of their puzzle. You have strengths and skill sets that they need for their business, or their cause, or their event. The idea you have been dreaming up for years has value and the people you are about to meet are key to helping you make it a reality.

The vision you carry in your heart, the job you have been yearning for, or the project you feel compelled to launch - is worthy of you stepping outside of your comfort zone and networking, getting to know more people, linking arms with more incredible human resources, and expanding your "bank" of new friends.

If you are hesitating about reaching out to others, here are some intentional questions for you to consider:

- Do I care about this cause (or mission behind this business or the purpose behind this event) that I want to tell others about?
- Am I pursuing this connection for good and noble reasons?
- Do I have something to offer them that could be an asset and a value to their industry, etc?
- Could this (opportunity) make people's lives better?
- Does my product or business answer questions that people are asking?

Given your situation, you may think of other questions to consider but the point of it is: if you answer yes to any of the above (or similar) questions, you actually have a moral responsibility to network and grow your circle of contacts and friends.

How will people know if you don't tell them? How will people be informed, inspired, or educated if you don't coordinate the event? How will people meet others in your circle if you don't offer to connect them? How will business owners know you are even in their town if you don't present yourself? How will people know of your product and service if you don't let them know?

You are created to influence. The connections you are about to make may make all the difference in the world. You might be the missing link to creating ... a tipping point. Networking is definitely worth the exploration because you never know where - and to whom - it might lead you!

WHY NETWORK?

Why do you need to know this skill of networking?

Well, why not?

Networking is a worthy and honorable endeavor. Few know what it is, or how to do it well. Some would say that in the 21st century when technology convenience and algorithms have modernized the ease and ability to network, that it is a no longer needed skill.

However, I suggest it is far from dead, but in need of reviving in a quality, genuine, authentic, and real way. Networking with other individuals in person, one on one, and sometimes face to face is something we need: technology can never replace the true value of human to human interaction. Truly, it is a skill that will serve us until our dying day. And actually, it's very disappointing that more people don't know how to use it well.

Some might say "use it only to get out of it what you need". Or perhaps others think it is a waste of time, ineffective, and a hyped up activity. Still others (maybe you?) think that they can check it off the list and move on. I suggest it is a way of life, and if you want to thrive at it and do it well, it all starts with how you view it.

Networking is more than just attending professional events, or doing "speed networking" where you scurry to pass out your business cards. True and valuable networking is tapping into the greatest resource on earth, people, and inviting them to partner with you (or you with them).

It Is a Key to Success

People are the best resource on earth. Every person is connected to someone else. Not only do they have things to teach me, but it's possible I have something that they need as well. So, why not link arms and work together on a cause, on a career change, or for a community?

It's possible that doing networking well is one of the greatest secrets for success. I believe it's more valuable now than ever before.

In this world where technology can link and sync you to anyone and everyone, there is nothing that will ever replace the value of garnering an introduction through a friend, or meeting someone new face to face.

In this day and age when interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to read people has declined (for different reasons), it is important that we understand how to relate to people, how to identify the right people, and how to help others be even more influential in their cause. It is time in our culture that we - yes, you and me - raise a new standard of truly cherishing and valuing people. Because people matter. And yes, even as an introvert, I can say this, that people make life better.

Within me, personally, is a passion to bring good to my community, and help advance causes I think are important. I also have a drive to find new clients for my business. At times I need references on doctors, or experts in certain fields. I would rather go to someone that a friend trusts vs just visiting someone I found via a Google search. This is networking.

Specifically my generation, the Millennials, cherish references, recommendations, and reviews. We have a higher level of confidence if someone makes a recommendation vs. if we just find it through a random search.

Networking is kind of like this invisible “whirring” that is always in play. You just have to tap into it to make it work for you! Oftentimes the networks don’t come, unless you “plug in” or reach out for a connection. You have to be an active participant in the process. You cannot expect it to work to your benefit if you do not agree to take part in the process. And it is not a short term endeavor. If you want to do it well, it is a long term project or even more so, it is a way of life.

You are Already Doing it

You have probably already used networking, more than you realize. Think about it. How many times have you had a need for some service, or tool and you have pursued that company or cause because someone else has recommended or pointed you to them?

We need people for everything! You have probably found yourself in one of these scenarios along life’s journey:

- I need a babysitter but don’t know who to ask. I wonder who my friends use for their children? If they trust them, that speaks volumes to me.
- I want to try a new recipe but I’m not too daring. Let’s look at the reviews and see what others recommend?
- I need a tutor. I will ask my child’s school who they would suggest.

- I want to get involved in the community - I wonder where I could best serve? I'll ask my friend at church on Sunday as she is very connected and involved.
- I need a mechanic for servicing my car -- but who do I go to? I'll ask my neighbor who to use in town. I'd rather work with someone trustworthy.
- I wonder what a good place is nearby to buy fresh, organic fruit? Hmmm - maybe someone in my mothers group knows.
- I want to check out the new restaurant on the other side of town. I'll ask my buddy if it's a good venue to check out with a date.
- I want to invite big sports teams to join a cause I'm chairing; I don't know the owners of these franchises but I know people who do. So I can reach out to them, cast a vision for why we should invite said teams and give them the resources to reach out to those VIPs.
- I want to buy a house; I'd rather use a friend who is a realtor - or a friend of a friend. If my friend trusts them, that is good enough for me.
- I need more people to be on my board for a youth project: I don't know all the financially successful people in my community that might have time and passion to give to this cause. But I can reach out to influencers that know me and see if they can help me find the right people.

The list goes on and on.

This is networking.

You could also see it as "seeking reviews, references, recommendations" but isn't it all interconnected? Personally I think networking, seeking recommendations, and consulting reviews are like siblings in a family. They are related: when we need or want or are seeking something outside of ourselves and we look to someone else to be a bridge to help us get to the desired destination this is sharing resources, or a form of networking.

Why do networking?

Because it leads to people, more opportunities, and better resources. By networking, you will discover new friends, new links to the journey of a successful life, and if you are already doing it - why not learn how to do it well?

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

My Grandpa Max taught our family that a stranger is a friend you just haven't met yet. Little did I know he was preparing me for the world of networking.

So what exactly is networking? Merriam-Webster defines it, "the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions." In a way, as I've already suggested, I think it is an old trade that has grown out of use because we rely so much on our "phones" and technology, forgetting sometimes people are the best source of information!

In layman terms, you could also say: networking is connecting with new people.

When my grandparents were growing up, they would use networking as a way of life. They didn't have "Google" but they did have a neighbor who they trusted that could refer them to a seed buyer of good rapport in the next town over for the spring planting.

They didn't have Facebook or Snapchat to find significant others but they did have a buddy who had a buddy who had a sister that was single. This buddy could introduce you. And many couples probably gave thanks to God for that introduction on their 50th wedding anniversary and many times in between.

The Greatest Generation, and other generations like them, got many things right. One of them was: they valued people. It was the neighbors who cared for one another, the townspeople who rallied when crisis hit, and the women who stepped into men's shoes in the factories when the men had to go to war. It was people helping people, hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder.

My generation likes to network behind the computer screens but when we rely on algorithms to find us our next great "Friend" on Facebook or LinkedIn, we are taking the lazy way out and skipping something beautiful in-between. The process itself, of networking, is an art, a dance, and a skill. If you will learn how to do it well, not only will you benefit but you will also help others do the same.

To network means, "I am growing my circle of people I know." And it also signifies that the more people you know, the more resources you have available for down the road when the time comes, if the need ever arises. And you also might just make a new best friend or big client in the process!

It is What You Make It

To be a good mover and shaker it starts with your own mindset. Be prepared to make slight readjustments, perhaps, on how you see the world of networking!

Obtaining the desired result may take time. But you have to start somewhere and the time to start is now. Just as growing a garden takes a process of tilling the soil, planting the seeds, and watering the seeds. Some seeds don't come up, and others do incredibly well. You have to weed, fertilize, care for - and eventually harvest. In the same way, there are different stages of networking. That is part of the adventure: you never truly know where networking is going to lead you. But be assured that many who are in your circle of friends right now are ripe for harvesting for your cause!

There are different ways of going about networking.

You will hear about networking often in professional circles or maybe in college. Everyone wants to grow their circle of influencers or their human capital resources - in people. Often times it is geared as a means to an end. To get a better paying job, go network.

There are certain people that are naturally geared to network, and others it is not quite as - well, fun! It sometimes involves exchanging of business cards, or introductions by email, or perhaps introducing two separate individuals that you personally know to one another for their mutual benefit, at an event.

To me, as someone who is wired for networking, it can be a way of life. It is very seamless and natural to take someone in a coffee shop you just crossed paths with and introduce them to another person at the same coffee shop. Now all three of us share a realm, the dots are connected, we can grow our circle of influence and outreach together because we all know one another behind this cause.

But to others you have to choose to put yourself out there.

The easiest way to embrace it is to first make sure you have the right mindset. Acknowledge how you have looked at relationships and connections previously is the old way of looking at things. This is the new way:

Every person you know is connected to someone else, or something else, that you need.

When I say “you need”, I am not suggesting that you become mercenary. “What do I barter to get a loaf of bread, get the new job, or help my son get a spot on the sports league.” That is with a transactional mindset that says, “I will be nice to you because I need something out of you. I won’t care about you after you give me what I want.” This is the worst kind of networking and I suggest you avoid it at all costs.

When I say “you need” I mean altruistically. The adjective altruistic means, according to Merriam-Webster, “having or showing an unselfish concern for the welfare of others.” So in this context I mean “need” in a positive - make your life better - sort of way.

Oftentimes the people that we become acquainted with may lead us to another connection. Or our paths may cross for 5 minutes but the conversation may be a missing link to the puzzle we’ve been trying to solve. Perhaps a new connection makes a recommendation of a resource we had never heard of that answers questions we have been asking.

Sometimes networking does not lead you to something tangible, but something intangible. The benefits and rewards of networking can take all sorts of forms.

Networking may lead us to dollars, or it may just lead us to truth that is good for our soul. It could lead us to a new friend, a new health remedy, or an awareness of a topic we had never known about until we - well, networked! Networking can serve as an art of meeting new people. Finding ways you can help them, you will grow in goodwill and grace with them. In turn, they may point you to the things you need for your effort or cause or endeavor or business. Networking is all about seeing people as having deep value instead of a stepping stone to where you need to go.

Networking Means More Than Money

To grow your network means to grow your resources and to grow your resources in people makes you oh so much more wise and wealthy (and by wealth, I'm not necessarily referring to money).

Sometimes you can go to "Networking Events" where people intentionally, forcefully, pass out their business cards so you can all add more people to your rolodex. It can have benefits or it can also increase your level of anxiety.

I prefer more of the "natural" or organic way. You meet a stranger, find you have something in common so you share a business card. Perhaps in talking with your mentor, he realizes someone in his contacts might be a great connection for you - so he makes the introduction. Or you run into a friend in the store, and meet her girlfriend who is starting a ministry that is the very thing you have been dreaming about.

Or perhaps you have a business meeting, really appreciate someone's contribution and you exchange information to "keep in touch." You may not talk to them for weeks but all of a sudden you will think of something that jogs your memory to why they should be engaged again and you reach out.

To me, these are "just doing life" networking opportunities. They are situations that invite you to care about other people and in the course of introductions, discussions or brainstorming - networking opportunities present themselves for expanding your circle.

Here are some of the most recent networking situations and how they have happened to me:

- Jackie texted me, an old friend I knew when I was coordinating an event; she reached out to check in, and had a favor to ask. But she ended up blessing me - by going farther in connecting me to a friend of hers. This friend - let's call her Nancy - and I chatted on the phone and I now have a new contact for Hollywood circles.
- Nancy and I had such a great chat that she wondered if I'd like to speak to her son (we'll call him Beau). He is an actor in Hollywood, has similar beliefs as I do and currently in a season of expanding his experience and looking for opportunities. Beau and I had a great video chat. I now know an actor!
- I'm working on a massive effort to build support for Police in my state; a like minded citizen wondered if I'd like to be connected to a major voice on the radio. Todd connected me to the guy who has the largest pro-military radio show in America and he is so excited about what I was attempting to do. I now have access to national levels of media.
- Adam has been talking to me about helping him make inroads with the faith communities around the nation; he took time to learn about a project I'm working on and went out of his way to make a connection between me and a key person. She and I exchanged emails and might grab coffee down the road. She is a fundraiser, and in influential circles. He did me a huge favor (and hopefully my upcoming attempts to help him will be beneficial as well).
- I am working on a youth project involving a local high school; I was at my favorite coffee shop and ran into a gal whose son attends the school. It just so happened that the guy serving as point person at the school (for our effort) was in the coffee shop at the same time so I grabbed Andrè and asked him to come meet Kisha. It ends up she knows his wife! But now the three of us can be on the same page together!
- An old client, referred another potential client to me. We are talking tomorrow about possibly working together.

The list goes on.

You see, networking can be as horrific and mechanical as you make it. Or you can make it a natural, casual, simple, joy filled experience.

Networking is simply: growing your circle of influence, connecting one people resource with another people resource. We are all moving forward in this life and sometimes you get to diverging roads where the way you are going to make it to the next mile marker, is by tapping into people that you have met along the way to see if they have the resources you need.

The Most Precious Treasure

If you are going to succeed at this you have to keep something extremely important always at the forefront of your endeavors. The most important key ingredient in all of this is, in a word, people.

Before you even begin to network, organize, coordinate, motivate or market: set your mind to always keeping the following principal in check. People are the greatest treasure in the earth. They have indescribable value in the eyes of God. Whether you are an atheist, or a strong follower of Christ - choose right now to always treat people that you want to connect with how you want to be treated. Go above and beyond.

No matter who they are, what they have done, or what they are capable of - they deserve to be honored, respected, and cherished. Choose now that you will treat them in this manner whether they say yes or no to your opportunity or to a phone call or meeting with you. Choose now that you will honor them, and be kind toward them even if they do not respond to your email or text message.

Every person has a story. They too have dreams, ambitions, worries, frustrations, and joys. Their time is valuable. They have places to go, people to see, families to care for, and jobs with great demands. Just because they close a door on you now, might be more about them than it is you. We never know what people are dealing with at home, or how they feel too overwhelmed to make one more connection. Give them space and time. Value them as humans above all else.

When you interact with people and you invite them to participate in your "important" opportunity - remember that they do not want to be treated as a means to an end. If you see someone you hope to connect with as a bridge to your next big dollar, you are going about networking in the wrong way.

You need to stop. You are not helping you cause, but instead hurting your own personal and corporate brand.

Move forward with grace, courage, and eager anticipation. Also, you will find that some people you invite to your network, your event, your mission or your cause are not the right fit. Don't try to squeeze them into a circle when they just don't fit (they may fit later but don't waste too much time!). Bless them as they go a different way and look for other people beneath your nose who are waiting on you and ready for the opportunity.

However, with every "no," remember there are so many "yes!" opportunities out there. There are so many people within your reach who are waiting to take part in your cause, to respond to your business proposition, to meet your candidate, to hear your message, and to participate in what you are doing in your community.

Why?

Because they are people: they were created for a purpose. They respond to hope. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. They yearn for community and fellowship. They want their lives to matter. Oftentimes, our hearts yearn to do something but we simply don't know where to start or how to get to the desired outcome. Sometimes business owners have a need for their team but they just haven't found the right person - and you presenting yourself to them might be the fit they are looking for. So many people have a need, or a hungry desire to contribute their time, talent and resources towards something worthy.

Many of them do not know it yet, but they are looking for someone - you - to suggest a solution, or to tap into them to help them find their role and meaning here in this life.

You may be the missing link.

WHEN DO YOU NEED NETWORKING?

It is beneficial to network when you:

- Are moving to a new town: "Hey, neighbor - who do you know in this town? Don't you have family that lives there?"
- Are planning a wedding: "Wow your wedding was beautiful; who do you recommend to help coordinate my daughter's wedding?"
- Are running for office: "Representative, when you were starting out, who did you talk to about coordinating your campaign and learning the ropes?"
- Are looking to grow your business: "Friend, who do you know that might be interested in learning more about my services?"
- Are looking for a new job: "Here is a recent copy of my resume! If you hear of any openings in my field, your recommendations would mean the world!"
- Are growing a movement: "I want to invite you to be part of doing something in our community on this issue. Would you or anyone in your circle be interested in being part of it?"
- And many other examples, too many to count.

Networking is often me reaching out but it's also people reaching out to me. It can come casually when you are passing someone at an event "Hey, you need to meet this person!" or it can come from intentional interaction like sending two people an email: "I think you two should meet for coffee to get to know each other."

The most valuable and honorable networkers are those who are looking for people they can connect vs. being the one that is always seeking out who can you connect me to, for my benefit. One has other people at the forefront of their minds, and for others it's all about, "me, me, me."

It's one thing to always be on the lookout for "who do I need to know." But it's even more valuable to keep your radar up to always be clued in to the needs of those around you and who you might be able to connect them to that will help them get to the next stage in their journey. When you attempt to help them, they will be much more open to your request for help in networking down the road.

People are very intuitive and smart and they will quickly discern if you are a narcissist networker (in it for what you can get out of it). If that is the case they will not be eager to engage. Fair warning. But if they see your generosity and observe where your priority lies, they will more eagerly return the favor!

As I've already addressed, it should be a natural part of life. As you start to look at the world of, "who do I know that others should know" with a desire to serve them (vs. serving you) you will notice your brain start to change overtime. Opportunities can come very easily, like this:

- I just had this great conversation with Don, an expert on podcasts, and I wonder to myself if someone else I know, Cage might be interested in doing a podcast. Maybe I should connect them!
- Susan is working on an incredible effort. I bet she would benefit from knowing Denny who is a radio host for a national program! This might help raise awareness for her efforts!

But it's also good to continually put yourself out there so more people know who you are:

- Distribute your business card.
- Drop your name in social media groups you are part of, "I have services handling this particular need: let me know if I can ever help you!"
- Mention to influencers that you are willing to help in certain areas. You never know: they may never ask unless you tell them.
- Volunteer your services when you don't need something so that when you do need something you will now have more experience for you resume, but most importantly - people that can speak to your credibility and good work, eager to recommend you to those they know.
- Attend community meetings where you can be seen, say hi to some old friends, and use it as a window to jog people's memories: you never know what opportunities may pop up as they see you!

At times, it's very appropriate to reach out to others in your corner and simply ask,

- *"Who do you know that might be interested in this cause? Would you mind pointing me in the right direction or making a connection?"*

When do you network? When you are looking to accomplish something, or when you come across people that you know will benefit from meeting one another. You network when you have to (like looking for a new job) and when you want to (like when you realize your two best friends don't know each other but that they will greatly benefit from meeting!). Some do it as part of growing their professional rise - or some, like me, take it on as a way of life. If you are like me, it's not so much when to network but when do you not network?

CARE OF YOURSELF

At the epicenter of your networking experience is one person. You. But the art of good networking is to make sure that what is projected is you caring for others vs. you being focused on advancing you. But before you can do any sort of effective networking you do need to take stock of your own heart, mind, and being.

A wise man once said a good name is better than great riches. Integrity matters. Keeping your word matters. Being honest, hard working, responsible and of good rapport matters. Before you advance down the journey of networking, first do inventory on yourself.

- Do you have a recent resume?
- Do you have a current business card?
- Are there any posts on your social media that could be distasteful? It might be time to remove them!
- Do you have a professional email address? (I mean, JamesBondforLife was cool in highschool but probably not the best one now)
- Is your voicemail on your cell phone recorded and professional?

If you have a sketchy past, don't fret. Who you are now is what matters. Proceed with grace for yourself, confident that you have an amazing amount of value to bring to the world.

The big thing for you to always consider: "As I meet new people, how can I be perceived?" Just make sure you put your best foot forward. Let new contacts see the real, authentic, genuine you - and if it's the right fit, they will be really impressed!

POSITIONS OF NETWORKING

When you step into the networking arena, or put on the networking hat, you have three possible roles:

Role 1: You are the one being connected by someone else.

Example: You walk into a room and a friend grabs your arm, "Amy you have to meet this business owner I was just talking to! You are going to be so impressed!"

Role 2: You are doing the connecting between others.

Example: You care about people and as you learn more about important causes, you realize, "Kelly needs to know Steve! I'm going to shoot them an email and encourage them to do a phone call!"

Role 3: You are intentionally seeking out people to network with.

Example: You are working on an important cause to help the Police in your state. You want to continue to spread the word about what you are doing, and grow your circle of influencers who will be message evangelists. You contact David who works closely with these networks, "Sir, here is what I am doing. I trust you and respect you. Do you know of others that I should personally connect with to share the vision of our cause, in case they might want to know about it and be involved in it? If nothing else, I want them to be encouraged!"

It's highly likely that you will fill all three roles at some time. I am pointing this out simply for your benefit and education as we navigate the world of networking together.

WHO DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?

You know people. More than you even realize.

Every individual is connected to many people who, in turn, are connected to many more people. So you aren't too far away from "knowing everyone." Well, in a round-about-extended way, of course.

As you keep reading, one of the steps for networking will have you identifying who you know. But first, I want to first stretch your brain.

Oftentimes we get stumped and think, "I don't know anyone!!" But that's not true. You do know people - lots of them. And you never know - unless you ask - who your close circle of family and friends know.

Let's do a hypothetical. Let's say Arnie is convinced he knows only 5 people. In his mind, that's all he needs to know. He has a job. He has a house. He has a car. He has a dog. He pays his bills. He visits his mom on Sundays. And every Friday night he takes his girlfriend out to dinner. He thinks he has a life that is fine without networking.

However, he starts to dream. He realizes that he does kind of want to, someday, maybe, kinda sorta:

- Get a different job
- Build his own house
- Propose to his girlfriend
- Buy a new car
- Take his mom on a great vacation

So yes, he finally realizes, he does need more money which will eventually mean a new job outside of where he currently works. Eventually. Down the road. But maybe he should start exploring his options - now?

Yet, as he warms up to the idea of networking he thinks to himself, "Now, wait. How am I ever going to network, to grow my circle of people if I only know 5 people?! I'm stuck!"

(Okay, okay so this is a little make-believe but I'm trying to make a point so stick with me.)

Let's say Arnie starts with who he knows. He thinks to himself, "Well, you never know. Maybe my cousin knows someone important ... doesn't hurt to ask, I guess."

He starts making a list of everyone he knows (yes, all 5 people) and he decides to start talking to them, sharing his idea of getting a better paying job, and just growing his circle of people. The people he knows include:

- His mom, Jane
- His brother, Sid
- His cousin, Greta
- His boss, Simon
- His girlfriend, Millie

He starts asking everyone. And after he has shared his vision, he asks them, "*Who do know that maybe - I should network with? Anyone?*"

Well, because he asked ... he discovered:

- His mom talks every week to Bobby, the kid that grew up next door. She practically raised him and is a surrogate mother now. It ends up that Bobby went onto college and did really well; he's now a CEO of a major company in Detroit. She will talk to him about it when he calls on Tuesday.
- His brother, Sid is thrilled his brother is pushing himself out of his comfort zone. He rattles off half a dozen people he's been wanting Arnie to meet for years! There is the old basketball coach from highschool days that Sid still keeps in touch with. Their old buddy Bert runs a car repair business and talks to all sorts of business leaders who come in and out. And there is Sarah the gal who is responsible for the local Chamber of Commerce network. She's definitely someone to meet!
- Cousin Greta wants Arnie to meet her boyfriend. He is a rising star in politics and she thinks George might have some ideas for him.
- His boss Simon, when he found out that Arnie was wanting to network - got nervous that he was going to leave his job! But Arnie made sure to let him know, he's happy at the job and just wants to spread his wings, stretch himself, and get to know some more people. Simon was relieved and invited Arnie to come to a BBQ at his house this week where different community members gather once a month to just talk shop and see how things are going in the community.

- So, while this was make believe, does it start your creative wheels turning? It's highly possible your own circle of friends and family are similar. They know people that want to help you on your job search, your cause, your event or mission. But they first need to hear from you.

Many of your people you already know are gold mines that will lead you to incredible resources but you have to know where and how to look.

Identify Your Resources

Grab a notepad and start brainstorming about everyone you know. Identify the people that you are related to, best friends with, and even those that you say hi to in the grocery store (some you have probably helped paint their living room, or watched their firstborn).

- Make a list - handwritten or spreadsheet (whatever you set up, use it so you can function with it in the future. You are building a Network of Resources).
- Use categories or tags so you can easily sort.
- Look through your Gmail or email contacts.
- Go through your phone contacts.
- Review your paper version address book (if you have one! Or maybe your parents' address book).
- Brainstorm with your spouse or parents, or best friend "who do we know that ..."
- Go through old church directories, the yearbook from highschool.
- Comb through social media networks (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook).

Go ahead - start writing.

They could be people you haven't talked to in years, or they could be people you just randomly met. Write down anyone you know. You won't contact them all necessarily. But this gives you a place to branch out from as you figure out who do you want to reach out to in your networking exploration process.

You are looking for people in your local community but also in far reaching circles. Keep reading. You will soon see how this comes to play.

HOW TO NETWORK

Okay, now here are some specific steps to get you started!

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR MISSION AND GOAL.

Your goal could be everything from growing a larger circle of friends, finding women to do a book club with you, meeting more men for a fantasy football league, finding new clients for your job or growing your list of supporters for your campaign.

Be clear in your own mind why you are networking.

STEP 2: BE CLEAR IN YOUR MIND AS TO WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE YOU ARE WANTING TO MEET, AND GET CONNECTED WITH.

If you need to connect with men for recruiting little league coaches, when someone recommends connecting you to a teenager or a senior citizen - they may not be the right fit. Thank them graciously for their willingness to introduce you but clarify what type of people you are looking for.

Stay focused on your goal. But if you do meet people who do not fit your immediate need, you can still embrace them as a new friend. You may find ways to collaborate on other projects down the road! Every person has value!

STEP 3: IDENTIFY WHAT REGION.

It may sound silly but it's important to identify what region you want to target. For example, if you are looking for a new job in Virginia to be near family because you have no interest in moving out of state, asking someone in Colorado if they know of any jobs does not make sense. However you can always ask that Colorado friend if they hear of anything in Virginia to let you know.

Networking can be overwhelming to you if you let it. It can also be frustrating to the person you are asking to help you network - if you aren't clear on the specifics of what you need. So the more you can narrow your scope and target things like the ideal region - the better!

STEP 4: IDENTIFY SPECIFICS OF WHAT YOU NEED.

Get clear in your own mind, first, what you need as you network. Here are a couple scenarios:

If you are looking for a new job, what type of job are you looking for?

- Full time, part time?
- Using which of your skill sets?
- What field are you looking to enter?
- With benefits?
- What type of organization or industry would you like to be part of? Food manufacturing, restaurant industry and agriculture all have to do with food but are very different.

If you are looking for new board members for a service club, what type of board members would you like?

- Do you want Church Leaders?
- Business owners?
- Parents?
- Teenagers?

It's okay to not know exactly what you are looking for or need but just some generic descriptions help. The more you can be specific with the person on the other end, the more you will help them help you get networked to an ideal person.

STEP 5: MAKE SURE YOU ARE PREPARED TO PRESENT YOURSELF.

Do you have business cards? Do you have flyers for the event you want to promote? When you identify people that might be a fit for what you are looking for, do you have something to hand them to explain to them more of what you are asking? (I.e. here is a flyer for the event, or here is a document explaining the vision of the cause, etc)

STEP 6: CONSULT YOUR OWN CIRCLE FIRST.

Like I highlighted through the example of "Arnie", you may be surprised at who is right under your nose.

Make a list of the key influencers in your life that you already have a personal relationship with. Of those people, consider who might be interested in what you are dreaming up. This might include family members that are connected to influencers in the community, state or nation. Your list might be 2 people long and it could be 100. But think outside the box.

- Start with your siblings: they more than likely know people that might be helpful for your goal.
- What do your cousins do professionally or personally? Your cousin Heidi was a teacher - maybe she would know what type of resource to seek out for your child. Or your cousin David is a brilliant woodworkman: perhaps he would know what builders you can trust for your new home.

- What professions do your aunts and uncles have (or did they used to have) that might be a pool of resources?
- Of your old high school teachers, or college professors you have kept in touch with - who might they be able to connect you with?
- Old classmates: what are they doing now, maybe they would be interested or know someone?
- Remember the neighbors you grew up next to? They always took an interest in who you are and what you are doing and they might have a recommendation.

When you are networking - start with who you know. Again, at this stage, you are building a pool of resources to then pull from - when networking.

STEP 7: ASK THEM.

To those people you have just identified, that know, love you, have had some kind of interaction with you in the journey of life - now is the time to reach out and ask them. Whatever your initial goal was, ask them one of these questions:

- **Do YOU ...**
 - ... have a job for me
 - ... want to be on my board?
 - ... want to come to my event?
 - ... want to contribute to my cause?
- **OR do you KNOW someone that might ...**
 - ... have a job for me?
 - ... be a good fit for my board?
 - ... have time to come to my event?
 - ... have the resources and interest to contribute to my cause?

STEP 8: GATHER CLUES FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

So once you have gone through your own circle of influence to see if they can help you, or want to buy in to your cause, always use them (and I mean that in a good way) for a launching pad for more ideas.

Sometimes people will stay in the "container" we put them in so you have to invite them to think outside the circle. For example, when you ask Aunt Jessie, "would you like to serve on my board?" And she says no, sometimes that is where the conversation can stop. But what you want is to get her to think beyond her own situation -- and who does she know beyond herself that might be interested.

This point is almost a duplicate of the previous one but this is so important as it is the nexus of networking. It's one thing to tap into our own resources -- but the real networking is when we tap into our own people and ask them to tap into theirs to then lead us to someone new that we can add to our resources.

And even if Aunt Jessie, says, "yes! I'd love to!" -- go ahead and still ask her for other suggestions. Why not ask her for recommendations, just in case she happens to know Warren Buffett, Katy Perry or Michael Jordan? So emphasis this question:

Do you have anyone (else) in mind that you know who might be interested in what I am exploring?

There are different ways of wording it, of course. But basically you want to find out from the people who know and trust you - who do they know that you should meet or talk to?

STEP 9: ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO INTRODUCE YOU.

Once your Aunt Gertrude and Uncle Harry let you know that "Yes! I have someone in mind!" then make a note of it.

If they don't do it on the spot, follow up with them and ask them to make an introduction. You can ask them to make the introduction in whatever way is most comfortable to them.

Make sure your resume, or event flyer, or write up on your cause is attached to an email, so they can simply forward it on in their introduction of you. Or you could print out some copies of a summary of your cause and put that in their hands, with your business card attached.

It is helpful to the people who will do the connecting to have something to pass on when they reach out to their friends, in whatever format, to reference and use to introduce you.

STEP 10: MAKE CONTACT WITH NEW REFERENCE.

When your friend Nancy sends a text message to you and the person she wants to introduce you to, Bob, make sure to respond in a timely manner in a friendly way. Propose a next step!

"Bob, it is so nice to meet you! Nancy thank you for this introduction! Bob, if you have an email address, I'd love to reach out to you there. Or would you have time to schedule a chat in the near future?"

When they get back with you, treat them like a VIP. Their time is precious and you want to go above and beyond honoring your friend's friend. Even if the contact comes back and says, "Thanks but no thanks" - that is okay! Treat them with the courtesy you would appreciate if the shoe was on the other foot.

Sometimes those on the other end of the introduction are easy and eager to connect with you. Other times, some extra patience might be needed. I love extending grace when connecting to people. Phrases like these with a new contact can give them lots of "no pressure" vibes:

- *No rush, Bob!*
- *If not now, maybe down the road!*
- *Bob, whenever is convenient for you!*
- *I am so grateful for even a moment of your time - now or in the future.*
- *Even if we don't work together, Bob - it's such an honor to meet a new friend!*
- *Bob, even if a connection does not seem good timing - please let me a new friend in the community to say thanks. I really appreciate everything you are doing for our town!*

Treat them with such honor and class that they will be EAGER to meet you, if it is a good fit. In today's day and age, treating people with excellence and honor is so unique and rare even that function alone sends a message that we are a different breed of leader called to class and statesmanship!

And be open to using whatever form of medium they prefer. When networking with someone new it might be through:

- An in person meeting (coffee? lunch?)
- Text message
- Phone call
- Email
- Zoom-video call
- Facebook Messenger
- Etc

But make sure your first face to face meeting (via video call or in person) is in a professional format.

STEP 11: CIRCLE BACK WITH THE ORIGINAL CONNECTOR.

Remember, people are treasures. The fact that someone you know thought highly enough of you and your cause or potential, to connect you to one of their friends is a huge compliment. Never take it for granted.

Always circle back to the people who connected you initially to say,

- “Thank you for making the introduction! We talked and ...”
- “Thank you for the connection! He followed up with me and was not interested at this time, but I truly appreciate you going out on a limb for me!”
- “Thank you for the referral! She never got back with me - but that’s okay. I just want you to know I appreciate the effort you went through to make this connection.”
- “Thank you for the introduction! She is excited about the project I’m working on and I think might be interested in serving on the board! Thank you!”

It is common courtesy and kindness to make sure they hear back from you and that you follow up on the opportunity they made available to you. Do it soon after you make the connection. You will assure them that you are a good caretaker of this connection they made for you (afterall, they stuck their necks out for you) and they may be eager to recommend you again in the future.

STEP 12: REMEMBER THE FOLLOW UP.

Follow up is key key key in networking. If it is a new connection you are making, follow up with them in a few days if you don’t hear back. Or perhaps you asked a question and are still waiting on an answer - go ahead and circle back with them. You should take the responsibility on to follow up and to see something through to the end.

If it is a new connection and you have promised them information, then go above and beyond to deliver it to them in a timely manner. Follow up. Do not keep them hanging. Keep your word.

You also want to move on it while you are fresh in their mind. They may forget about you and your cause if you wait a few days or weeks. Take action now while you are near the front of their minds.

I recently had a situation that a colleague in the political world had 2-3 phone conversations with me, really eager to connect to my network of people in the faith

based community. He was so kind and professional! But I challenged him on the fact that, “you promised me information the day we talked and it is 4 days later and I’ve still not received the information. You want me to make connections to my networks for you - but I need to know they will be followed up with promptly.”

To his credit, he did get back to me, acknowledging my concern with understanding. He promised that would not be the issue with these introductions. I was encouraged and appreciated his intentionality.

To me, following up in a timely manner is polite. It’s like saying “thank you for dinner” to the dinner host. Or, leaving a server a nice tip after you have had good service at the restaurant. This act is good manners in the realm of networking.

STEP 13: ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED FOR POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS.

If you know you want to grow your business, attend local business networking events. Go to places where potential clients, customers, colleagues, etc might be hanging out.

- If you have an agriculture business, are you going to the local farmers’ markets so that your name can get exposure and you can meet new players?
- If you are running for office, are you finding a way to meet the key leaders in the community? Do you attend City Council, or the local service clubs?
- If you want to do a community event, are you attending other community events to show your support and meet the people behind the scenes that are putting that event on?
- If you are working to build a network of different church leaders, have you pulled up a list of all the churches in your community and then identified someone you might know that goes to a few of those churches?

Using simple searches online through Google, or the Facebook Events feature, or LinkedIn will find you gatherings of people to get plugged into. You can also check local flyers on community bulletin boards in your library or local grocery store.

The point is, go where the people you want to meet - are most likely to be located.

STEP 14: ASK A STRANGER FOR A RECOMMENDATION.

SO if you have gone through your circle of influence, and their circles of influence and you are still in need of a connection to grow your network - get creative.

Based on your mission and goal, consider who in the professional world might be able to assist.

I.e. let's say you are going to do an event for Police and you are looking for a caterer to make a specialized cake for the Officers.

Why not contact the Police Department, explain to them what you are doing and is there someone they would recommend you use?

Or you are looking to find new clients for your woodworking business: reach out to contractors and home building associations and ask if there is anyway you could place an ad in their program, or take one of their teams to lunch to get to know them as you would really like to be made available to their network as a service.

STEP 15: DO A BROAD ASK.

Sometimes you just don't know where else to turn: well, hop on your social media platforms and throw a question out there, "Does anyone know where to find ..." or "Does anyone have a recommendation for who I could talk to on" You may be amazed at the resources and people that will surface, willing to make themselves available to you and your effort.

STEP 16: KEEP RECORDS OF CONVERSATIONS AND NEW LEADS.

Be a good record-keeper when it comes to who was recommended by whom. Find a system that allows you to keep note of:

- Who did Mary recommend I meet with?
- What was my conversation with Bob about?
- How did John respond when I talked to him?
- Who did the service club point me to?

The more your networks grow, the more people and faces you will have to keep track of. Set up a system now and it will make things easier down the road. But it will also serve as a prompt: when Sarah comes to you and says, "who suggested we meet?" you never want to respond with "ummmm I can't remember!"

THE LIBRARY OF TIPS

Here are some other secondary philosophies to remember.

Tip #1: Networking is all about people (sorry, I know I already said it - but it's worth repeating).

Tip #2: Networking should be all about relationships.

While your goal in networking is so you can get something out of it - go about it with a heart and attitude that genuinely wants to add value and purpose to those you are about to be connected to, or those you want to connect.

Tip #3: People do not want to be "sold to".

Show that you care more about the people than just "what you can get out of it."

Tip #4: Find something you can relate to them on.

Part of the secret of networking is finding something you can relate to them on. Even for those that you disagree with them on 99% of something, there is still 1% of commonality and that is something. Focus on what you have in common and use that as a bridge to making a personal connection. Obviously, choose your words wisely.

Tip #5: Take interest in them when you don't need something.

So you have someone you want to get connected with -- take an interest in what they are talking about and doing first. They are holding an event? Attend! They have a newsletter? Sign up! Do something first to benefit them before you ever ask them for something.

Tip #6: You may have to keep asking, who do you know?

So you need someone to join your board. Keep asking people "who do you know that fits this descriptive?" or "Does anyone come to mind?" You will find that many people will respond with a "yes! I know John! Here let me introduce you!" And bingo! You have a potential connection. But when it doesn't happen, don't get too discouraged. Just keep knocking on doors. You will eventually find what you need. The quests that are harder - just might mean that the "end connection" is all the more worth it.

Tip #7: Follow up is key.

Never expect people to come to you, or to follow back up with you. Never assume that one "touch" or "invite" or "attempt to reach" is sufficient. Follow up, follow up, follow up.

Tip #8: Don't force a connection if it's not jiving.

Sometimes connections just aren't supposed to happen. Other times you will meet people and feel like they are your long lost sister - you hit it off immediately and have so much in common. But when connections just don't feel right, you have red flags for whatever reason, or they just don't flow -- it's okay to set them aside and move on.

And yet at times, some connections that are supposed to happen just take a little more work in getting on the same page and that is okay too.

Tip #9: Always be asking "Who do YOU need to know?"

So you want to grow your circle of influence? Great. But so do others. Always be mindful of who you can "offer" to connect to others. Have you asked your friends, Mary, Bob, and Sam "who do you need to know?" It's another way of saying, "How can I help you, as I'm looking to you to help me?"

Oftentimes someone will come to mind: "Oh! I know Sue, Harry, and Melissa! They may be the perfect fit. Let me introduce you guys. I think you will have lots in common on the project you are working on!"

Keep it simple by saying, "Let me make an email introduction or let me text them and connect you." Always make the explanation for why you are connecting people together. "I think you two have this in common." Or "She is asking for something that I think you have access to. Can you maybe help her?"

Tip #10: Go above and beyond to never burn bridges.

Whether you were inviting someone to join your nutrition business or you're asking them to support your campaign, remember to part ways with a smile and in kindness. Always behave and treat others in such a way that, even if they reject you, when you see them again you will be able to look them in the eye, shake their hand, and have confidence because you valued them at the very core of your interaction.

Don't burn bridges if they shut the door in your face.

Tip #11: Follow up with the original connector.

If Bob connected you to John and you ended up having a phone conversation with John - let Bob know that you two connected.

Tip # 12: Always live to fight another day.

A friend wants to invite you to have lunch with the Mayor of your town. You don't know him but from what you have seen, you do not respect him. However, your friend has invited you - and that is significant to be invited.

Plus you never know when and how you might need the Mayor's involvement in an effort you are working on, down the road. So go, don't snub the Mayor (or your friend), and behave with kindness and seek to understand. You might disagree with the Mayor on this important topic, but live in such a way that your credibility and influence will not be marred when you come to the point of needing his participation on something.

It's called "living to fight another day." You never know what battles will come tomorrow, or what cause or event will need the Mayor's support. If you rant at the Mayor now and embarrass your friend, you will not be respected for down the road. You will burn more bridges than you could rebuild in a short period of time.

Tip # 13: Always value the person above what you can obtain from them.

Sometimes you might approach somebody, and ask them for a phone call having to do with your new business. Only when you get them on the call, you find out they're going through a family tragedy right now. In that moment, forget that you are in need to sell someone on your business. Instead, honor them and take an interest in their life and situation above all else.

You will find out when life calms down and you ask them again in six months for another conversation not only will they respect you but they will take a deeper interest in what it is you want to say because you cared about them.

Tip # 14: Have information to share and to point them to.

When you go networking, always make sure you have something to point people towards (i.e. a website or even an email or phone number they can reach you). You don't have to have a website before you start networking... but make sure you have an easy way for them to reach you or learn more about what you are doing and proposing.

Tip # 15: Make "honor" a priority.

The trait of honor is a semi-lost skill in our culture. But it doesn't have to be.

To honor someone means to elevate them above yourself. My challenge is, as

you network and develop your cause and effort, to make honor a way of life. At every chance you get,

Yes, you may be right in “that particular” situation. But remember networking, and growing a network, is all about relationships. Those who are new to you will benefit greatly from seeing you honor others above yourself. It is a rare skill and it will open more doors down the road.

- Honor people’s lives above your own needs to make a sale
- Honor someone else’s cause before your own
- Honor the people you are meeting with by buying their lunch or coffee
- Honor people by letting them go first
- Honor people by being a good steward of their time

Believe me, as you cloak your own brand and culture in honor you will benefit greatly.

Tip # 16: Always aim to be professional.

Even as you are working on a personal effort, put a professional hat on. Do not take it personally if someone does not come through for you. Try to see it through the lense of trade, business, and professional partnership.

But even more than that, as you work to network, and invite people into your world more, make sure your publications and documents are professional. Are your emails spell-checked? Do you offer the basic courtesy of saying thank you? When you show up to a meeting do you offer to buy their coffee or do you assume they will buy yours? When you do a video chat are you in your bedroom or a coffee shop? It’s the little things that make a big impact.

Tip # 17: Always say thank you.

Say thank you to the person for meeting with you, say thank you to the people who made the connection for you, say thank you to the secretary who helped set up the appointment. Be all about gratitude. Thank them for their time even if they close the door on you.

Tip # 18 Save business cards.

Slip business cards into protective sleeves (you can grab at the office supply store) and collect them in a folder. Make a note on the back on as to where you met them/who they are.

Explore different online resources like Evernote where you can take a photo and import them into an online database. Or just create envelopes to keep cards in. Do something to hang onto them because you may need them someday, if nothing else but to refresh your memory as to who you met and when.

Tip #19: Have a networking mindset.

As you get to know more people, you will find out what interests them. When you come across a resource that brings them to mind, go out of your way (if appropriate) to share it with them, whether they are a paying client or not. You never know when your kind authentic gesture could bring you a return on investment some day.

Tip #20: Referrals are significant.

You can often find new connections without a referral but referrals are incredibly helpful.

If Superstar Ted happens to be introduced to you through his friend - and your cousin - Wayne, that will make all the difference for Ted to take you seriously.

Ted knows Wayne. Wayne has done a lot of work for him over the years and the fact that Wayne vouches for you to Ted creates an incredible comfort level in Ted towards you. In other words, because you are of relation to (or friend of) Wayne, you go from being just another stranger to someone that is worth paying attention to. Ted respects Wayne. You are important to Wayne. So you have some value to Ted. Make sense?

No matter how great of a case you could make about yourself to Ted, without Wayne's introduction and referral, it will be a much harder road than if you can get Wayne to open the door for you. Where you can, get referrals to help make connections.

Note: a referral is someone that already knows the person you want to connect with.

However, a word of caution if I may: be very strategic and mindful about seeking the introduction through a referral. Just because Joan, Josie, and Jim know Ted does not mean he respects them or takes them seriously. So seek out the person that you perceive to be respected and admired by Ted - aka Wayne - to see if he can open the door.

The referral who leads you to the VIP will significantly shape the impression of the new contact and of you.

Someone as goofy as Bugs Bunny or Big Bird may know Ted and sure they could introduce you but Ted is likely not going to take you seriously based on who is introducing you. So seek out the ideal person to open the door for the networking connection for you.

Tip #21: When connecting others - your name matters.

Oftentimes if you are recommending a connection to someone and you send that person off to go "say hi" to the recommended contact - them using your name can be immensely helpful. Recently, I was having coffee with an old colleague of mine.

A couple people came to mind that I know who I thought he could probably benefit from being connected to (and them to him). I sent him screenshots of the Facebook profiles for these people. And I told him, "When you message them, let them know I sent you."

It is not arrogant to suggest someone use your name. Actually, especially if you have a good reputation, it is like a key to get into a new chamber. When he reaches out to the people I recommend, and they find out that he knows me and that I recommended he connects with them, I am hopeful they will be very open to adding him to their circle of trust. Make sense? So letting others use your name - can be a very helpful thing.

THE NEVERS OF NETWORKING

After networking, and having others try to network with - and through - me, here are some of the things I recommend to not do. I hope it saves you some bruises along the way.

Tip # 1: Never cold-contact someone saying, "Who do you know that I need to know?"

This angle to try for networking is the most bizarre approach.

Here, think it out with me:

So you don't know me but you want to talk to me so that I can point you to people who may be interested in your business because you know that I am "well networked and know people?"

Like I said, strange.

Keep in mind that when you ask people to lead you to other sources - make sure that first point of contact knows who you are, has a relationship with you, and has an invested interest in helping connect you to resources.

You want an introduction (via a referral) to a new contact to come as though you are a friend. And when you don't know me, I can't introduce you to the people I know in a natural and authentic way. And it's just crass, transactional, rude and - weird. So don't do it.

Keep in mind the awkward position you are putting that person in as well. When you go about networking with an intentional mindframe, it means the person you want to introduce you -- is sticking their neck out for a complete stranger. It also means they are putting their name and reputation on the line.

If stranger Jay reaches out to me Amy and asks for a connection to Mike, what happens if I introduce Jay to Mike?

- Mike will assume that Jay is trustworthy and reliable and credible. Why? Because I am trustworthy, reliable and credible. So when I bring someone to Mike he is immediately more interested than if he didn't respect me.
- Now what if Jay blows it? Makes a fool of himself? Lies, cheats, steals, or just acts unprofessional? That means Amy's credibility goes down the drain. In Mike's mind, that means "I am not sure I can trust Amy any more when she

brings me connections!" The first mess up - it could pass but the second mess up or third, then Amy's reputation and credibility goes out the window for Mike.

If I have lost you in this, don't worry about understanding all the backlash behind the scenes.

Just don't ask a stranger to make a connection for you to someone when you don't know the stranger (aka why they are called stranger). It's poor taste.

Tip #2: Never take people's networks for granted.

I often tell people, I'm not a millionaire yet in my bank account - but I am in people connections. To people like me who cherish connecting people my networks are my resources. They are wealth to me. I take my name credibility seriously. I take my reputation seriously.

There would be nothing worse than me connecting you to a friend who ended up burning you and giving you bad service. So when you approach people with hopes that they will lead you to key contacts - always treat their connections like gold, and with the highest regard. The connections you seek out may not be as valuable yet to you (they should be) but they are to the person who is going out on a limb to connect you. So tread carefully.

Tip #3: Never cold-approach someone via electronics and say, "hey, let's grab coffee!"

Never randomly message someone you don't know and suggest you meet.

My response? Ummm why? To the person being asked - me - there are a litany of questions:

- Ummm who are you?
- How do you know me?
- Why do you want to talk to me?
- What are you going to sell me?

Sometimes, I truly want to know who they are. If Bob reached out to me, because a mutual friend that I deeply trust recommended he do so - that's a whole 'nother story.

I can hear the question in your brain now, "well, how do I get to know that person

then?" Well, maybe you don't. Or you do some deeper exploration to find out who that person knows that you know. Here's a real life scenario. Let's name him John.

John messaged me on LinkedIn and identified that we had similarities in a nearby town. He was a younger guy, dressed professional in his profile photo, and my radar did not get the sense that this was ominous. But my time is valuable and as an introvert (in part), among other reasons, I do not agree to "just talk to anyone." So I started pressing him with some questions.

He responded to me, attempted to make some points of connection or highlight a reason to gather. But I was so suspicious... just waiting to see what he was going to pitch me.

My patience grew short and I drew a line in the sand, but I left an open door. I finally told him, "Yeah let's not meet up. But feel free to email me any information." He said he would for sure and that was a few weeks ago and I've still heard nothing.

Now, if John had approached me out of the blue and said, *"Amy, you don't know me, but Representative Smith is an old family friend. I am new to Jackson and working to develop my professional network. Representative Smith speaks very highly of you and suggested I get in touch with you. I know you are probably very busy - but I just wanted to explore it. I'd be grateful for even a few minutes phone conversation."*

That would have made a world of difference. But it didn't happen and my life is still okay without ever having had coffee with this random guy John who is setting up his professional network with who knows what he is selling in my town.

Worst case scenario: if you DO attempt a cold approach like this, be straightforward with what you want to talk about. Please.

Tip #4: Never assume.

Never assume that someone is going to do something for you. Never assume that they will introduce you just because you know them.

Tip #5: Never follow up too much.

Give people time to process your request.

Follow up with them the day after your meeting with a thank you note. Then follow up with them in a couple weeks, "did anyone come to mind?" But after a little bit of no or little response, don't be obsessed with follow up. Give them room to breathe. If you don't hear from them in a few weeks, try again in 6 months.

Be persistent, sensitive, and intentional - but wise. Follow up, but don't press it too much.

Tip #6: Never lie.

Never never never say you know someone when you don't or that you have experience in an area that you don't or that you love a certain thing when you don't.

It's better to be honest and transparent even if it loses you a client or an opportunity. Never sacrifice your soul for the perceived benefit of what could be. It's not worth it.

Tip #7: Never be self-centered when you are networking.

Take interest in the other people, how are they doing, what can you learn about them and from them. Never assume that they want to know all about you. They don't.

Tip #8: Never do all the talking.

Ask questions, listen, and then ask questions. Be delighted when the person on the other end takes interest in you. But be intentional about listening first and talking later.

Tip #9: Never be unprepared when you gather.

Whether it's the phone call you were hoping for or a coffee meeting, do not do not do not be unprepared. It's so disrespectful to the person you are just meeting.

Have an idea what you wish to discuss, make it clear to them why you are meeting up, and have easy access to any of the information you need to share with them to make your case. Be early for the appointment, take a few minutes for niceties and then get to the meat of the meeting. The best part? End early. Make it clear that you respect their time.

Tip #10: Never take advantage of a generous friend.

Most of us have certain people in our lives that are incredibly successful people

who know everyone. Many of us have people who truly love us and cherish us and are eager to help us. However it is important to be very cautious when utilizing their generosity.

For example, a friend of mine knows “everyone”. I know she respects me a lot ... but if I went to her every other day with a request for a connection, it would be rude. Identify a couple key contacts you think could help you with and pursue those with her. But don’t overwhelm her with requests.

Be respectful of her generosity and never “wear out your welcome.” Don’t impose too much. Even if all she can do is one connection for you - that is still gold.

Tip #11: Never leave them hanging.

Bend over backwards to do what you can to provide follow through. Send what you promise. Call back when you say you will call back. Even if you hit a deadend, never leave people hanging with unanswered questions.

Tip #12: Never turn someone away.

People are resources with limitless potential. If you have an inquiry into a dozen people for their interest in a position on your 6 member board and by the time all 12 of them get back with you, you have filled all the spots -- but they still want to help, create a new committee! Or find some way to engage them. Never turn them away.

Tip #13: Never project someone’s endorsement or referral, when it hasn’t happened.

Never use someone’s name to project endorsement (or referral) without their permission and especially if it’s not true.

Ok: “I worked for John Smith, national and internationally recognized expert on rare coins.”

Not okay: “Governor Bob Brown speaks very highly of me. When would you like to have coffee?”

As we’ve already discussed referrals are gold. But what is absolutely wrong is to give the impression that someone backs you - when they don’t, and especially if you do not know them. It will come back to burn you and it’s simply distasteful and wrong to tread in lies - even if you think it will help you get through an important door. Don’t do it!

RESULTS AND WHAT'S NEXT

Be prepared to hear all sorts of responses - including silence. People have different reasons they may not be able to meet you, or may not have an interest in learning more. Perhaps they simply don't want to come to a gathering. You may hear things like:

- "No thanks ..."
- "I am not interested ..."
- "I am moving out of state..."
- "That cause just does not interest me ..."
- "I am too busy ..."
- "This is just not a good time for me right now ..."
- And even ... silence.

Here is where discernment comes in: some people you may be convinced they really are not meant to be a part of what you were doing. So perhaps they need to be approached from a different angle. Perhaps someone in influence can make the case to them of why what you're doing is vital.

And at other times, let their "no thanks" be "no thanks." Leave a good taste in their mouth with their experience with you and in the end, they might circle back around on their own accords down the road in which case they will be a much more loyal participant as they came to the table in their terms.

Be Prepared

As you work to network, and get different responses, you will discover different aspects from different people:

- Some people are simply not meant to be a part of your cause. So let their no be a closed door and move on.
- Some people are truly so busy they need multiple follow ups and reminders.
- Some people had an abrupt life change and now aren't able to follow through.
- Some people who have hearts of gold want to say yes to everything. They have the best intentions! Be careful to give them extra grace but perhaps don't put a ton of pressure on their shoulders to deliver.

Some people will simply forget. They just need a gentle reminder:

- "Can you come?"
- "Were you interested?"
- "Were you able to forward the email? Did you get any responses?"
- "Just following up: would you like to grab coffee?"

That's the beauty and frustration of networking: it's with people. We people are complex beings. You can try predicting our movements or our moods - but all of a sudden we get thrown a curveball and we change on you. Just learn to expect all sorts of different responses, to meet all sorts of unique personalities, and to encounter all sorts of simply brilliant human beings. It is a marvelous journey!

The World of People

You will get emails that will bounce, phone calls that won't get returned: sometimes you might want to make note of what changed and why.

Jot down if someone wants to be involved going forward or if they ask to be removed from your mailing list.

If someone just got married, make a note that they may need some extra time to get settled in a new life before they are ready to dive into your project.

If they have a new baby, make a note and maybe send a congratulations card! They may have extra reason to care about what you are doing but may not be able to help in the same way as before. Perhaps all they want to do is be added to your email list?

Just because someone cannot help you in the way that you anticipated does not mean that they are a "dud" of a connection. And always be prepared for how the game may change from what you initially intended when you approached them.

If you talk to someone who is passionate about education but not about your issue - make a note of that! You may have an educational opportunity down the road that they might appreciate.

Never Let Them Be the Roadblock

When you are intentionally networking, you will be juggling a few different balls. For example, you might have a dozen emails into different business owners, you might have a few lunch meetings scheduled, and you might be texting with a couple different people.

Never let someone's lack of response hold you up from continuing to knock on doors. If you have a need for one thing, it's okay to pursue more than one person for that need. For example, maybe you are looking for a sponsor for your upcoming event and you have an inquiry into one local business but you have not heard back yet.

Well, why not engage others on the possibility as well? If business leader 1 comes back and says, "Yes, I'll sponsor" and business leader 2 says, "I'd like to sponsor as well" then you have two sponsors instead of one.

But never let the lack of response from people hold you back. Your need for a job, your big event, your cause is too important to be in a holding pattern while you wait to see if "that potential lead" circle back with you. Go ahead and juggle more than one ball - or potential connection - at once.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR NETWORK

In days long ago, a rolodex is what was used to collect contacts. You would have the round gadget sitting on your desk at work: one central place where you would make a note of who you knew, what their phone number was and how to get ahold of them.

Then we had address books and phone books and directories.

Now we have social media and cell phones and email address books.

Whatever the format is, there are two things to remember when you are building your networks and growing your contacts:

- Keep record of them.
- Back them up in a safe place.

Record Keeping

You want to keep track of who you reach out, what they said (are they interested or not), who do you need to follow up with, who asked to not be on your email list, etc. You know you best so choose a system that works best with your brain, and your way of life. Here are ideas of systems to consider.

Notebook: One of my cousins has a small business and he uses a notebook to keep track of who he has talked to. It's just a plain ol' vanilla notebook that he can make note of conversations with their contact information, etc.

While it is not technology driven, it works and it helps him keep a record of where he has been and who he needs to call. I love paper! Your system for keeping track doesn't have to be perfect, but something that works for you!

Google Documents: I have a spreadsheet that I update periodically called "Breadcrumbs." These are potential (at some point) clients.

When you have your own business that you are continually "mining" for new opportunities or new clients, you want to keep track of those individuals or companies. It has value to make a note of those that are possibilities to pursue, or those that have been recommended and by whom, or those that I am currently in discussion with. I even like to keep track of those I opted not to work with, for different reasons. For me, this is a good place to keep a running log.

This system also allows me to watch for trends. Are there certain people referring me? Am I garnering new contacts and new leads, but no new clients? Are there patterns that would help me understand how I need to refocus my time, etc? Maybe this will work for you as well.

Calendar: You can always buy a large calendar or schedule book and make detailed notes about who you talked to, or when you should follow up with people.

Evernote App: I appreciate the Evernote App. You can use it on your phone and computer. There is a free version but also a paid version. I like to use it to take notes, make lists, use it as a working location if I need to remember certain things. You might find this tool - which can be synced across different devices - to be a perfect fit to your needs!

Not only will record keeping be helpful to remind you what you have accomplished, and direct you where to go in the future. It will also provide encouragement to see how far you have come!

Backing Things Up

I am a big fan of making sure you have a second copy of things. Phones can crash, notebooks can get destroyed or get lost, or files can be accidentally eliminated from your computer. As long as you are able to back things up to a cloud (an online "universe" that will store your material), that will help!

Online Servers: Try iCloud, or Google documents for a server of sorts. Make sure your contacts and notes get backed up on there so you can access them should anything happen to your phone or computer where the originals are based.

Hard Drive: You can also use a hard drive or a flash drive to back up your spreadsheets, or notes.

Camera: If you are ever in a pinch and you need to make sure you have copies of information - take a photo with your phone's camera! As long as your photos are getting backed up - that too can use as "proof" of a conversation, or a copy of something important.

Email: Some can consider email as a good backup system. But be cautious with this: emails can be hacked, documents can be deleted, etc. It is a good place to keep some trail of what you have sent, or said, or who you have made contact with, or what you have promised -- but at times it is not enough. Just be prepared.

HOW NETWORKING LAUNCHED ME

When I was preparing to graduate from college, the economy was bad. I was one of those graduates that really didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do with my life when it came to specifics for jobs. Some people know they are going to be a doctor, for example. Me? My degree was a double in Communications (emphasis on Public Speaking) and Psychology. What in the world was I to do with that?

My mother - Queen Extraordinaire of Networking - suggested to me that I network. "Huh? Why? Do I have to??" I probably asked.

She suggested I write a letter to friends, letting them know that I was near graduation and job searching and did they have any jobs in mind that I might be a good fit for?

So, I did.

I compiled addresses, combed through my parent's network of people as well as my own. I identified respected people who probably knew other influential people who might be able to help. I sent them a snail mail letter and probably a copy of my resume.

Then, I made follow up phone calls. "Hey Mr. Smith! I just wanted to follow up on the letter I sent you. Did any jobs come to mind?" A few calls later. And, bingo.

One of my college roommates, Caitlin, and I had both grown up in Michigan pre-college. We ran in slightly different circles but still "knew" each other's families. And then we ended up rooming together. I had sent something to her parents.

Her dad got on the phone with me, "Amy! Do you know Michigan Family Forum?" I didn't know them but per his suggestion, I followed up with Michigan Family Forum and one of their executives. I had a discussion with him and he said, "Do you know Citizens for Traditional Values?" I did not. But he put me in touch with Jeff with what would become my place of employment for close to 12 years. After a couple interviews, prayer, contemplation, considering other directions - I said yes and little did I know that that decision would be so integral to the rest of my life.

All because of networking.

My mother was ridiculous for thinking up this idea - or was she? While I did not like

it initially - she was right to push me to do so. You hear the phrase, "It's not what you know. It's who you know!" I think it's both. I think you have to be a well rounded individual, grounded in who you are, mature, responsible, ambitious, of good character - and know lots of the right people.

I've been networking ever since.

My rolodex (I like using that term even though it's very outdated) grows. My database grows. My email lists grow. The numbers I add to my phone grow. My circle grows.

I am still networking. I will keep networking.

It is one of God's great skills in life that you are wise to explore. Networking opens up a whole new world of opportunity, friends, and resources. If you choose to embrace it.

NETWORKING Q AND A

Q: Can I do all my networking via email without talking to people face to face?

A: Yes and No

Yes: technically you can accomplish a lot in today's day and age via electronics but I strongly discourage you utilize this as your main course of outreach.

No: To stand heads and shoulders above the rest, there is great value in being willing to pick up the phone, schedule a phone call, or meet someone face to face.

Special Notes:

Introverts: while we can do a lot behind a screen, to allow that to be our only haven or platform to reach out, make a request, or seek a connection - limits us. It cheats us of the possibility of getting to know people through more human interactions. Electronics is still my default for connections but I also utilize text messaging, meeting someone via a video appointment, scheduling a phone call, or meeting them one on one. You can do both and do it well. Just don't let your weaknesses prohibit your growth and expansion.

Extroverts: it is imperative that you use your time wisely even in networking. To you, there may be joy in running off to another event, or having a phone conversation. But much of what needs to be done can be done via technology. So why not use it to check off a few items, and save your precious time for the best conversations and encounters? Follow your instinct. Just be willing to utilize email and technology when you can and when it seems appropriate.

Q: How many times do you follow up with someone?

A: It depends.

A good rule of thumb is no more than three in an initial contact but you have to be careful with your timing. Here is a rough outline.

Your friend, Mary, introduces you to Ben via text message. Follow up with that text exchange right away, even if it's to say, "Ben it is so nice to meet you! Mary you are a gem for the introduction! I am about to step onto an airplane for a few days away but will put you at the top of my list to connect with when I return."

When he follows up with you, don't leave him hanging. If he doesn't follow up with you, give it a couple days to circle back.

And if in a couple weeks you never hear from Ben - you may assume he's not interested, or you can ask Mary, "Is it possible we had the wrong number?"

Before you give up completely, try reaching "Ben" through an alternative means. If Mary has an email for him try that. Or even a phone call to him, might get his attention.

But too many follow ups is just - too much. Too many attempts has the possibility of making you seem desperate and leech-ish. People may start avoiding you instead of moving towards you or in stride with you. Follow your instinct or the advice of the person that initially connected you.

Q: What if they don't want to hear about what I'm doing?

A: If people ask to be removed from your email list, or mention they are not interested in meeting or knowing more - always give grace.

You never know what is going on in their life right now and it's possible, no matter who did the recommendation, they may just not be a fit to what you're attempting to do. And that's okay. Why waste your time with an uninterested party when you could focus elsewhere.

Extend grace and gratitude to them and send them on their way.

Q: Do you give gifts when networking?

A: Yes and no.

It all depends on the person and the situation. Always be sensitive to how could this be perceived? I.e. if an older gentlemen crosses paths with an influential young woman and his intentions are pure for the networking purposes: him sending her a "Thanks for the chat" box of chocolates can be strongly mis-construed. But a polite follow up email could be sufficient.

Sometimes, the little genuine touch means more: the text message, the hand written thank you note, or the follow up phone call to "just check in to see how the surgery went" can mean more than all the well intended gifts in the world. Be authentic.

Q: How can I make a good, immediate first impression?

A: This is important.

People will form an opinion of you in the first 10 seconds or less. And, by the time they meet you face to face, it is possible they have already been learning about you via Google searches, social media posts and more.

How you present yourself really matters, both before you meet them and after.

- Take care of how you present yourself (have you brushed your teeth today, washed your hands, is your shirt ironed, are you using slang in conversation, etc).
- Present a firm handshake.
- Look them in the eye.
- Smile.
- Hold your head high, shoulders back, and give them the impression of confidence (whether you feel confident or not. You can always act like it for a few minutes!)
- Be polite.
- Thank them for their time.

Conclusion

Networking is an ongoing skill that you should always be developing. In the same way that a Dentist has to continue his training, or an athlete has to keep practicing, never consider yourself to have fully arrived to a networking expert.

There will always be people to meet, always tips to learn, and always ways to improve. Let that be the fun of the game!

But as you work to get to know more people, you will find that your world will become even more full of value. You will discover amazing new opportunities. Networking can help you achieve your dreams and there is nothing quite as fulfilling as helping others fulfill theirs.

So, are you ready?

Get networking! And be ready - to change the world!