Approaching the Networking Process

Excerpted from...
Power Networking
By Donna Fisher and Sandy Vilas

Just as there are many ways to network, there are many benefits to reap:

• Networking provides easier access to products and services.
• Networking enhances teamwork and camaraderie.
• Networking provides opportunity for mutual sharing, serving, supporting, giving to one another.
• Networking generates ease, fun, and success in all endeavors.
• Networking provides a socially acceptable way to contribute to people.
• Networking leads to new relationships, new opportunities, and greater accomplishments.
• Networking provides opportunities for expanding our horizons on a personal and professional level.
• Networking assists in the realization of our goals and dreams in life.
• Networking fulfills the basic human desire for relationship, satisfaction and service.

Key Steps to the Networking Process

Excerpted from...
Million Dollar Networking
By Andrea R. Nierenberg

Know what you are looking for.
Have a well-thought-out plan for your career path. Asking key questions will help the person you’re speaking with assist you more effectively. Also know what type of information you are seeking from that contact person: Referrals for a specific job opening? Information on a particular career field? Advice on the best strategies to break into a career? A secondary contact?

Prepare an elevator pitch.

In other words, prepare a 30-second commercial of who you are, what you do and what you’re looking for. This not only forces you to clearly articulate your goals, it helps lead to great first impressions.
Don’t just talk, listen.
While your contacts may not be in a hiring capacity, the information they provide has the potential to be extremely valuable in your job search. Follow up with any other contacts s/he may give you.

Join trade groups and/or professional associations.
Joining groups that are specific to your industry or field is an excellent way to form a larger network. Volunteering on committees and/or getting further involved is also a good way to meet people.

Build relationships.
Ideally, a network is continually being built as you progress in your career. Rather than only contacting people when you are in need of advice or information, create a relationship that is based on mutual interest and help.Emailing or sending a quick note to new contact people throughout your career is a good habit to maintain contact.

Reciprocate.
When you ask others for help, be prepared to return the favor.

Send a thank you/keep informed about progress.
Maintaining your network is one of the most important pieces of successful networking. Let your contacts know you appreciate their time and information and keep them apprised as to the status of your search. Additionally, these ties should be cultivated beyond your search. You never know when they will once again be fruitful for either yourself or your contact. Remember not to abuse the time of your contact person.

Excerpted from...
The Toastmaster
By Phil Stella

TOP 10 TIPS FOR NETWORKING ETIQUETTE:

• Respect the time of the people you’re networking with.
• Listen more than talk.
• Ask more than tell.
• Give more than ask.
• Maintain good eye contact.
• Don’t mix networking, marketing, and selling.
• Finesse really pays off—don’t come on too strong.
• Make other people comfortable.
• Ask if this is a good time for a brief chat when following up.
• Thank people for their effort on your behalf.
LinkedIn Can Help You Maintain Your Network

Excerpted from...
“Great on the Job” (blog, posted 2.3.11)
By Jodi Glickman

The Best Networking Email You'll Get All Year

Experts and coaches remind us daily about the importance of keeping in touch with your network. If you're like me, LinkedIn just handed you the perfect alibi on a silver platter.

Did you get an email last month from your friends at LinkedIn with the following subject: "Jodi, 86 of your connections changed jobs in 2010"?

If you did, it is quite possibly the best networking opportunity email you'll receive all year. Experts and coaches remind us daily about the importance of staying in touch with and taking full advantage of our networks -- but the challenge is not in knowing that we need to reach out, it's knowing how and when to reach out. If you're like me, LinkedIn just handed you the perfect alibi on a silver platter.

Here are three ways to take that email and put it to good use:

I. Congratulations!

I talk a lot about TOUs or "thinking of you's" -- TOUs are a great way to stay connected to your network. Wishing someone a happy holiday, congratulating them on a favorite team’s sports win (Packers / Steelers anyone?) or congratulating a former classmate or colleague on a new job is a great way to ping someone in your network.

2010 was a year of big change. Take a minute to click through that info graphic (I just love clicking on the faces and being directed to their profiles) and find out where your friends and colleagues have gone.

What are they doing now? Was it a promotion, a lateral move or a new direction altogether? Whatever the case may be, send a quick note to say congratulations. It’s a fast and easy way to reach out and share some well wishes.

Andrea, hello and congratulations!! I see that you've taken on a management role with Doctors without Borders. That’s amazing! I hope you're enjoying your stint in Niger and I just wanted to reach out and let you know that I was thinking of you. I'll look forward to touching base when you're back in the states next year. Best, Jodi

II. Great to see what you've been up to:

There's also probably a subset of people in that email who you haven't connected with in ages. Reaching out after losing touch is always hard -- everyone has friends and colleagues we admire who have fallen off our radar. Consider this email as a reset button on those relationships -- it gives you a perfect excuse to reach out today and congratulate a friend or colleague on that new job or comment on their recent activity:
Michael, how are you? It’s been ages since we’ve spoken but I just wanted to reach out to say hello. I noticed that you recently left Deloitte so I wanted to touch base and see how things are going. I’m actually in the process of launching a start-up; I’d love to tell you more about it....

III. I’ve always been interested in the fashion industry:

Finally, for those of you looking to find new jobs, make a career switch, or simply learn about opportunities in fields outside your own, consider this email as a catalyst to gather information and do some market research.

Julie, a client of mine, noticed that a former recruiter she had worked with on Wall Street had just jumped ship to join the fashion industry. Julie was thrilled -- she had long been interested in a career in fashion and she suddenly had a connection to someone at one of her favorite design houses. Here's how Julie crafted her email:

Isabel, hello and how are you? I just noticed via LinkedIn that you joined Diane Von Furstenberg in July. Congratulations! I'm sure leaving Wall Street was a tough move. I've actually been interested in fashion and retail for a while and I'd love to talk to you about your experiences at DVF. Please let me know if you might consider scheduling a call to talk about how things are going for you...

Whether you have a strategic reason for reaching out (you're looking for a new job) or you're just interested in maintaining contact with someone in your network, reaching out to acknowledge a friend's new position or updated status is a quick and easy way to connect. LinkedIn has done the hard part for you (you're certainly not going to sift through everyone's profiles to see what they've been up to), so build on that momentum and be sure to follow up -- who knows what’s in store for 2011?

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The Elevator Pitch

Excerpted from...

3 Tips to Lift Your Elevator pitch off the Ground Floor

By Mark Henricks


The first elevator reportedly dates to the first century, when Roman gladiators rode crude lifts to reach the floor of the Coliseum. The first elevator speech may have occurred not long after...possibly as a pair of combatants exchanged trash talk before an upcoming fight?

There’s no doubt that today’s small business owner doing battle in the marketplace can ill afford to miss a chance to make the right impression on a potential customer, investor, supplier or other possible partner when they happen to cross paths. This is the genesis of the modern elevator pitch, a 30- to 60-second presentation suitable for delivery in the brief interval when two people find themselves in close proximity between floors.
Almost everyone in business has an elevator pitch story. Sometimes it relates how an entrepreneur cleverly and smoothly landed an introduction to what turned out to be a linchpin customer. More often, it includes elements of confusion, delay, and regret at a missed opportunity. To make sure you don’t miss your elevator opportunity when it arises, rid your mind of these three common elevator speech misconceptions, and embrace the truth.

Myth 1: An elevator pitch is a sales tool.

Reality: That’s true only if you consider an advertisement a sales tool. An elevator pitch should not be prepared or presented as if the end goal were to get a signed purchase order on the spot. The environment — a hallway encounter, waiting in a queue at a coffee shop, or standing in an actual elevator — is not conducive to getting an actual sale. Rather, an elevator pitch should be an introduction, a primer and an educational tool, as described by Chris O’Leary in *Elevator Pitch 101*.

Myth 2: Pack your elevator speech with facts that will amaze the listener and demonstrate a mastery of technical nomenclature.

Reality: Trim your fact-packed presentation down to the one or two most important statistics or other data points. And avoid the jargon. As Audrey Watters says in *The Art of the Elevator Pitch: 10 Great Tips*, your goal is to inform and intrigue, not to overwhelm.

Myth 3: Once you’ve written and practiced your elevator speech, you’re ready.

Reality: The problem here is that you need more than one elevator speech. The one you’ll use in a given situation depends on your objective as well as the person who will hear it. You’ll have one speech for an encounter with a potential investor, another for a potential joint venture partner and another for a likely sales prospect. Your abilities to quickly size up your elevator-mate, choose an appropriate goal for the ride, and select the proper speech from your repertoire are crucial, as described in *How to Craft a Killer Elevator Pitch That Will Land You Big Business*.

Sure, you may want to look at social media, email and targeted discounts a la Groupon for your marketing efforts. But don’t neglect the art of the one-on-one, seconds-long presentation. Unless you live in a strictly one-story town, you’ll need it.