

NETWORKING MASTERY

BUILDING CONNECTIONS THAT MATTER



Networking is essential for business growth and personal success.

Yet the adage “it’s not what you know but who you know” seems to have significantly more weight in this 21st century world of busyness, where jobs are filled before they are advertised and previously unthought-of collaborations appear out of nowhere to create new and competitive markets and steal market share.

Individual talent, previous performance successes, educational achievement or even good old self reliance is no longer enough to survive in the fast-moving business landscape in which continued relevance, agility and innovative thinking are key.

Sure, networking still matters – but it’s the NETWORK leaders build around themselves that matters more.

The Harvard Business Review article *Managing Yourself: A Smarter Way To Network* found that, “The executives who consistently rank in the top 20% of their companies in both performance and well-being have diverse but select networks... made up of high-quality relationships with people who come from several different spheres and from up and down the corporate hierarchy”.

Here are five key ways to master the art of building a network that works.

1) Get Clear On YOU

First of all take ownership and get clear on your goals and dreams so you can make the right decisions and meet the right people to take you there. It’s about:

- understanding your values so you can consistently walk your talk,
- identifying your strengths so you can share them,
- owning your weaknesses so you can seek help on them, and
- being yourself so you can be authentic and true.

When you get clear on ‘You’ and network with conviction, opportunities are created, value is exchanged, influence is increased and connections become transformational.

2) Identify The Critical Few

British anthropologist Robin Dunbar said there was a limit to the number of relationships humans could comfortably maintain – 150, to be precise. He suggested this was the amount with which we could



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maintain stable relationships, remember each other’s names, keep in contact and do each other favours. Anything larger than this, he said, results in the creation of other sub-groups and tribes.

Momentum, however, starts with a significantly smaller circle of influence. It’s about engaging your personal network on a deeper level, putting you right in the middle of a network that connects you to people and information that matters for your growth and personal success. It’s about being small, strategic and smart and ensuring you have these key people to support you:

- **PROMOTER** – your personal champion and inspiration
- **PIT CREW** – who keep you on track and nurture you
- **TEACHER** – who expand your knowledge and wisdom and push you to know more every day
- **BUTT-KICKER** – who hold you accountable for your actions and decisions.

3) First Impressions Do Count

The importance of making a first impression cannot be overestimated, because first impressions influence later impressions. James Uleman, a professor of psychology at New York University explains, “You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression. In spite of the congeniality of many professional gatherings, judgements are being made and impressions are being formed all the time”. Whether we like it or not, appearance is our first filter – whether in person or online. Everything on the outside contributes to others’ impression of you. So make it a good one and take control.

4) Become An Action Taker

If you say you are going to do something, follow through and do it – this is a non-negotiable when it comes to networking mastery. When you have spent time with

someone, engaging in conversation and exchanging value, then you must make sure your words align with your actions. Your ability to nurture your network, to leverage conversations, to constantly give back and deliver will build the relationship over time.

5) Exchange Value

Value exchange requires trust, faith and the ability to truly engage in conversation, to be switched in to the needs of others and to be curious about how you can help. The cross-fertilisation of intelligence and sharing of skills and knowledge means each party involved gains knowledge, information and eventually perhaps even financial reward for their involvement, but the priority is the sharing of information, the connection that is made and the network that is built. When you learn to share openly with others with no expectation of anything in return, then everyone benefits. It’s the two-way street of powerful networking.

It was Richard Branson that said, “Nobody can be successful alone” and in our fast-moving business world a network that works is critical to fast-track personal and business success. Choose to network wisely, building a circle of influence that allows transformational connections to be nurtured and business growth opportunities to be fostered.

Janine Garner is a Fortune 500 mentor, keynote speaker and author. She is a partner at Thought Leaders Global, which helps clever people to become commercially smart, and the founder and CEO of the LBDGroup, a networking community that connects like-minded women together to help them achieve extraordinary growth. She is the author of two books - *It’s Who You Know: How a network of 12 key people can fast-track your success* (Wiley) and *From Me To We: Why Commercial Collaboration Will Future Proof Business, Leaders and Personal Success* (Wiley).

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