

Introduction

I am not a natural networker; I am an introvert who networks. I work in an industry where, in order to succeed, I need to interact with a wide group of people, some of whom I know well and many I don't know at all. I learned to network successfully by creating a comfortable process for myself. Usually, when I join groups I get involved on committees, often ending up as a member of the board or president. Having a role helps me feel useful and comfortable in the group. If you ever see me at a large group function, probably I am one of the speakers. Again, a role that keeps me grounded and calm.

I've made a good living coaching lawyers and other professionals in practical skills, including leadership, management, business development, and networking. Being an intellectual introvert has helped me communicate with other intellectual introverts. I share the lessons I've learned. I teach my clients how to research and plan, how to create "safe havens" from which to venture forth and explain the why of what they do. Practicing what I preach has enabled me to participate in many wonderful group encounters, lead important and interesting organizations and projects, and keep my own company's pipeline filled with stimulating, remunerative work.

I wrote this book for all the "nonnaturals" in the world who are afraid of the networking process. The book offers anyone who takes the time to read it the tools to turn ad hoc networking into a series of planned strategic steps that will move them toward their goals. The security of a plan and preparation offers introverts the confidence they need to venture forth. The book is also for all the hyper-extroverts who sail through an event having too much fun to maximize the available networking opportunities. Strategic networking keeps extroverts focused; helps introverts feel safe; and encourages everyone to make efficient, effective use of their networking time. . . .

Strategic Networking Explained

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Networking is more than a marketing technique. It is a way to build your service or business by engaging in activities that are natural to humans. We are mentally programmed to connect with other people, help them thrive, and, in helping others, flourish as well. The best networkers create these positive associations. They want to understand the needs of others and help them move forward. As they gain reputations for helping others succeed, they too grow.

This kind of networking is positive. It creates affirmative feelings of support, understanding, and trust between the giver and the given. It is strategic because it is

goal driven. In this book we look at the why, what, and how of networking:

- Why it is possible to do well by doing good.
- What strategic networking is.
- How to proceed in the most effective way.

On the one hand, data show “that more than 80 percent of professionals consider networking to be crucial to their success.”¹ On the other hand, data show that “one in four don’t network at all.”² This book is for people in both camps: those who know they should but don’t, and those who do but not as successfully as they would like.

To get a clearer sense of how master networkers approach networking, I interviewed 35 of them from a variety of industries and professions. When you ask these networking pros to explain why networking is important to them, the same concepts recur over and over. They emphasize the feel-good aspects:

- Meeting people, interesting people, people with similar values and interests
- Building relationships
- Helping others and, in turn, being helped by others
- Expanding their horizons
- Being a connector
- Being visible to those who are important to them
- Becoming part of a community
- Following conversations of interest
- Sharing their expertise

For these professionals, effective networking is an important component of their success. Their investments in networking activities have enabled them to become rainmakers, build successful relationships, and enjoy reputations as effective connectors.

David Maister, a prominent law practice pioneer and consultant to professionals, wrote that to be successful in life one should “spend your investment time as seriously as income time. . . . If your investment time is spent wisely on carefully chosen activities, you will have the ability to significantly affect your future success—and lifestyle.”³

1. David H. Maister, *True Professionalism* (Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 48.

2. Gotham City Networking Group’s mantra.

3. Email invitation from Network After Work—Seattle, April 16, 2018, info@networkafterwork.com.

4. Aja Frost, “15 Surprising Stats on Networking and Face-To-Face Communication,” updated November 15, 2017, <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/face-to-face-networking-stats>.

Both Taylors attend the same Attain Success Group cocktail party.

- *Taylor Together arrives early to work the room. S/he has done some research about the event and attendees and has a mental list of people to meet, those s/he wants to reconnect with and what s/he might add to conversations. Taylor Together looks attractively professional and is obviously in an outgoing, good mood as reflected in her/his body language.*
- *Taylor Timid enters late, grabs a cup of coffee, and exchanges cards with some people in the coffee line. S/he looks disheveled, grumpy and a bit out of sorts. Taylor sits down at a table and pulls out her/his phone to check for any messages. A few people drifting by say hello. Taylor Timid wonders why s/he decided to attend this meeting in the first place.*

Back in the office, Taylor Together spends 15 minutes updating his/her contact list and making plans to keep in touch with two people s/he met who could, over time, become clients. S/he thought to her/himself, what a useful, engaging event. Taylor Timid leaves feeling s/he has wasted an evening on a boring event with uninteresting people of no particular value to her/his practice. S/he takes 15 business cards out of a jacket pocket and throws them in the circular file.

The moral of this tale is that networking is what you make it. With some preparation and a forward-thinking attitude about the event, Taylor Together's evening led to two new connections and interesting conversations. Taylor Timid had a handful of business cards from strangers to add to her/his email list. When networking is an ad hoc, thrown-together, last-minute activity, as it was for Taylor Timid, it is rarely worth more than the effort put into it.

Now, let's look at how it plays out in real life by sketching the activities of two women, one a lawyer and the other a financial planner, both of whom build businesses, resources, and friendships through strategic networking.

Abby Rosmarin, Lawyer, Mediator, Mental Health Counselor

Abby Rosmarin is a lawyer, mediator, conflict coach, NYS Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and executive director of the New York Association of Collaborative Professionals. She thinks of the word "networking" as negative because in her mind it is linked to "aggressive salesmanship." Yet, she is an experienced, effective networker who has built her practice through networking. She networks to learn, to mentor, and to help others. For her, "networking is about learning from colleagues, sharing common interests and seeking opportunities for experiences with like-minded people." She doesn't believe in speed networking, business card exchanges, or one-minute intros.

Abby thinks that typical networking activities elicit surface knowledge of other people. She wants an in-depth interpersonal connection so that she feels she really knows which individual in her network can best help each client. Abby broadens her network by using social media to connect to people she reads about, and then typically arranges to meet them in person to get to know the actual person. Her LinkedIn groups similarly reflect the therapist lens through which she defines meaningful relationships.

Her networking is guided by her interests and beliefs. She follows her inclinations—she has studied a range of topics from other fields, such as medical bioethics, to enhance her interdisciplinary collaboration with others and expand her ability to help her clients. Her list of current organization memberships—legal, social services, and community services—reflects this approach. [See her current memberships in Appendix 3, pages 207–209.]

Abby and two friends founded WESTCHESTER PROFESSIONALS: Face-to-Face in 2013 and disbanded it in its present form on April 30, 2018. The impetus for the group was Abby's interest in getting to know other professionals well enough to trust them as resources for her clients. Their goals were spelled out in the group's mission statement.

Face-to-Face Mission Statement

WESTCHESTER PROFESSIONALS: Face-to-Face is a multi-disciplinary networking group founded on the belief that we serve our clients and our professions most effectively when we develop collaborative relationships with people in our network.

As our name indicates, we meet face-to-face in a setting that encourages participants to challenge beliefs, expand horizons, and look beyond business card credentials as we build a network that is integrated and collaborative.

Our meetings are didactic presentations, small and large group discussions as well as experiential projects. All these focus on the practical and interpersonal aspects of building connections, which is the foundation of our organization.⁵

Face to Face Members

Our members are professionals who are engaged in services with the common thread of guiding clients through changes that lead to an improved quality of life.

5. On WESTCHESTER PROFESSIONALS: Face-to-Face meeting notices.

We represent a cross section of helping professions—including but not limited to psychotherapists, family laws attorneys, physical and spiritual healers, organizers, coaches.

The group⁶ typically met quarterly in Abby's home for breakfast and "structured conversations," which the three founders designed before the meeting. The focus was on learning. Each meeting had a theme that was introduced by a question people had to answer when they gave their introduction to the group. For example,

- Say your name and tell us what your shoes say about you.
- What does belonging to a group mean?
- Tell two truths and a lie about yourself.
- If you could create a bumper sticker that gives a window into who you are, what would it be?

After introductions, the leaders teed up the meeting topic in more detail and the group as a whole discussed it, or they talked first in smaller clusters before sharing insights as a group.

The purpose of these exercises was to jointly experience the discussion in the safety of the group. Discussions concluded with members sharing what the conversation meant for each of them. Members felt the personal nature of the discussions enabled them to know each other as "whole persons," creating a level of intimacy and community that gave rise to trusted relationships.

The group as it existed for five years has been disbanded, but Abby hopes it will evolve into something else. At the last meeting Abby said, "I don't see this as an end because we all know each other. I look forward to what happens next." Isabel, one of the three cofounders, promised to set up a meeting to discuss the next iteration of the group.

The group embodied Abby's networking precepts. With or without it, her networking continues to reflect her own interest in and enthusiasm for knowing other people in a deeply personal way, sharing new ideas, and contributing to social progress.

Stacy Francis, President and CEO, Francis Financial

Stacy Francis, a financial planner and wealth management advisor, started her company, Francis Financial, in 2002. She networks in order to help as many people as she can and grow her business.

6. Information from Personal Interview, August 7, 2017, and Greenwald attendance at two meetings in 2018.

Stacy believes that networking is an essential component of success. She says,

“I adore helping people. Networking has been the key to my success. I liken networking to a garden. In the beginning there is a lot of hard work. But you learn from experience and experimenting. It takes time to grow. And then you reap the harvest.

Without networking I wouldn’t have been able to grow my company and add colleagues who share the work with me so I can spend quality time with my family. Networking is the engine of growth.

I think if you are not networking you are doomed to fail. If you are afraid to do it, your definition is wrong.”

How did she do it?

She began by joining groups that would help her learn how to network effectively and also teach her marketing skills. As she became more proficient, she began building personal networking groups strategically crafted to move her toward her goals. [See Stacy’s current group memberships in Appendix 3, page 209.]

For example, 13 years ago, she started a general-purpose group, Allied Professional Women [APW], an open networking group that met monthly to share ideas about growing businesses and to showcase the diverse businesses in the group. For Stacy it was a way to learn, build resources in allied fields, and link with referral partners. She was the spark plug that gave the group direction and cohesion. She “created a community of incredible women who were able to collaborate together and really support one another.”⁷ Her group mailing list grew from a handful to over 600 women.

Then, in November 2017, she made the decision to shut it down because her strategy became more focused. She moved from an emphasis on all women in financial difficulties to a niche market: divorced and widowed women. She wanted to devote more time to groups focused on this niche market as opposed to the eclectic assortment of businesses in the APW group.

So, in 2017, she turned her attention to growing the NY chapter of the Association of Divorce Financial Planners [ADFP], an organization which she has been the Chapter Director of since 2011. For Stacy, it provides information and access to other professionals in her field, many of whom have become friends, colleagues, and referral partners.

7. Stacy Francis email to members of the APW group, November 16, 2017.

ADFP members are divorce financial planning practitioners (both men and women) that use the divorce financial planning process as defined by ADFP. They must charge a reasonable fee-for-service and cannot be compensated in other ways for providing divorce financial planning services. To be accepted as a member, applicants must provide evidence supporting satisfaction of certain educational, experience, and ethical criteria. Divorce financial planners can explain financial options, help set priorities, and lead clients through the hard choices ahead.⁸

In addition to her organization memberships, Stacy plans unusual networking activities on purpose. She wants the events to encapsulate her brand: intimate, educational, fun, different, and memorable. For example, she hosts various private networking groups:

- Money Circles—A series of five evening sessions attended by 10 to 15 women, all going through divorce, who discuss the issues confronting them and possible solutions. She offers these circles several times a year.
- In May/June and September/October, three to four times a week, she invites seven to ten clients, prospects, colleagues, and referral sources to join her for a NY Harbor sail on her sailboat. Sometimes she hosts referral partners and their invited guests. For every invitee it is a very personal, intimate, memorable experience.

Stacy supplements her in-person group meetings with one-on-one meetings and a robust social media program. She typically has four one-on-ones a week—a large time investment—but her networking pays off: She estimates that 80 percent of her clients come from referrals.

Her networking trajectory from broad-based to niche follows her growth strategy. She went from networking with all kinds of professionals and service providers to a focus on those serving the divorced women market; and from groups created by others to groups that reflect her clientele, her personality, her firm's culture, and her brand.

Rosmarin and Francis are involved in a wide variety of networking endeavors. Networking, in all guises, probably forms a part of every day for them. But does all networking have to be this involved to be effective? Certainly, it's true

/page/DivorceFP.

8. <https://www.divorceandfinance.org/page/Join>; <https://www.divorceandfinance.org>

that what you get from networking is commensurate with what you put in, but does every successful networker have to do this much?

The answer is *no*. Not all successful networkers have to be active at this very high level. A person can focus his/her networking on one group or one type of referral source. An introvert may avoid big parties and develop meaningful relationships with a handful of people. An extrovert may enjoy a “Pied Piper role”—leading multitudes of people toward shared goals. Ambiverts—those somewhere on the continuum between introvert and extrovert—will create their own combinations of activities.

Many professionals equate networking with specific activities and then define it as comfortable or uncomfortable. You should never purposely put your-

“Strategic networking is an ‘investment time’ strategy. It is a goal-driven process for creating personal relationships that help individuals achieve economic, social, and emotional goals.”

self in a situation that makes you feel awkward. Your body language will say you are ill at ease and people will read your actions as insincere or inauthentic. Strategic networking processes are designed to make networking activities less stressful because you are prepared. There are many ways to find comfortable networking situations where networking is a by-product of an activity you enjoy. Think parties, lectures, golf, conferences, little league, hiking.

Networking is more about focus and attitude than activity and aptitude.

Those who benefit from networking activities see a relationship-building process. Strategic networking activates a plan to link their networking activities with strategies designed to move them toward specific goals.

Networking Defined

Strategic networking, as an “investment time” strategy, is a goal-driven process for creating personal relationships that helps individuals achieve economic, social, and emotional goals. It should be an intentional strategy for finding, meeting, and establishing solid relationships with individuals who can introduce you to new ideas, colleagues who can introduce you to people who want to use your services, and potential clients who want to hire you.

On a more emotional level, networking fulfills human beings’ need to interact socially in groups. “Networking begins as basic communication between

people who share an interest in each other and their business, for the purpose of advancing opportunities for each of those who participate in the network.”⁹

Three lawyers I interviewed gave similar definitions:

Roger E. Barton, managing partner of a mid-sized law firm, says networking is all about relationships: “making relationships . . . leveraging relationships . . . learning from others through relationships . . . and always thinking about inter-connections—how to put A and B together for their mutual benefit.”

David J. Abeshouse, lawyer, arbitrator, and mediator, built his own group to meet a variety of needs. He says, “Customizing your own networking group to me seems better than trying to fit your own round peg into some other folk’s square hole.” His group is always built around relationships of “like-minded people, who are or become friends, sitting around a table, sharing ideas.”

Employment lawyer Richard Friedman’s business comes from referrals, so he networks to find and nurture referral relationships. He defines networking as “meeting other people who are interested in expanding their contacts and clientele and with whom I can follow up for our mutual benefit.”

Why Network?

People’s reasons for networking range from personal quests to new business acquisition. This book emphasizes ways to use networking opportunities to build a business, a career, or a new life. Some people feel that when a personal business goal is part of the reason for networking, it adds a selfishness that taints what should be the altruistic underpinning of networking relationships. In reality, whatever the reasons behind your networking strategies, “paying it forward” is always an important part of any networking plan. Remember, successful networkers help themselves by helping others.

Through networking people develop:

- Allies
- Colleagues
- Friends

9. Lindy Asimus, “Create Your Personal Network Online,” August 25, 2017, http://www.designbusinessengineering.com/create_your_personal_network.htm.

- Mentors
- Personal resources
- Professional resources
- Referral sources

In terms of developing business, individuals may want to

- acquire knowledge or competitive intelligence;
- build a business, technical, or personal resource network;
- find new clients;
- raise their visibility among their prospect groups or with their clients or referral sources;
- showcase their expertise; or
- enhance their reputation.

Dan Lear, a lawyer and Director of Industry Relations at Avvo, networks because “he likes people and likes learning from them.” He finds or forms groups “built around common interests, passions, and worldview.” He looks for “strong connectors to share his energy and enthusiasm in learning about who people are.”

Larry Hutcher, co-managing partner at a midsize law firm, learned the basic tenets of networking in college while working summers as a Fuller Brush salesman going door to door and asking “How can I help you?” He says this is basically what he continues to do today.

Jessica Thaler-Parker, an attorney working in regulatory change and project management in NYC, says “Everything is networking. It is about meeting people with different skill sets and experience and not knowing where the connection will lead. I love people and learning about them. I like a big network so I can tap in for work or personal issues and always have someone to reach out to.”

Marcia R. Golden analogizes meeting people while networking to dating, and to creating a solid, strong relationship to marriage. At the marriage stage, networkers still “don’t sell to one another. Rather, we choose to do business with each other.”

Where Does “Strategic” Fit In?

Adding the adjective “strategic” to networking refers to intention—the networkers’ intentions to create a planned, cumulative networking plan focused on opportunities that move their goals forward. Three networkers explained their basic strategies:

- Hollace Topol Cohen, a bankruptcy attorney, says “Networking is about establishing the right relationships with people. Business comes from these relationships because people see your integrity through your networking interactions with them.”
- For Larry Hatcher, co-managing partner of Davidoff Hatcher & Citron, “Networking for me always occurs in defined group settings where everyone comes with the same purpose. Good networkers are good listeners and good givers. You give first because it always comes back to you.”
- David Rosenbaum, head of IT Consulting at Citrin Cooperman, said, “The strategy of networking reflects what is going on in your profession. You need to highlight your unique features and make sure that people who need you can find you.”

Strategic networking is a process that happens through a series of integrated steps.

1. You begin with your goals: what you want to do and why you want to do it.
2. You create a plan to fulfill your goals.
3. You identify places where the kinds of people you want to know gather.
4. You then plan a series of networking initiatives that situate you in the places where your target market goes.
5. Relationships grow as, over time, people find points of connection that build a foundation of trust. It is a gradual process that moves strangers forward from their initial handshake to a close connection between friends.

Lenny Carraturo, commercial business development officer at Wells Fargo Bank, is a connector, a center of influence for accountants, attorneys, wealth advisors, and business owners who need access to his bank's financial resources. His goal is to be viewed as a professional who "wants to help companies become more efficient and increase revenues and profit margins." He always asks, "What are you doing? How can we work together?"

Even with an intentional strategy there is always room for serendipity. You never know when someone you know will introduce you to someone they know who will become your client and friend. Linda Klein, a lawyer and past president of the ABA, tells about the time she did an easy favor for an accountant. Twenty years later, now a business advisor for SCORE, he sent Linda a SCORE client who needed his new business incorporated. That start-up business grew into a successful private company, and continues to be her client.

Networking Strategy

Networking strategy is not etched in stone, nor is it one size fits all. The specifics of a networking strategy morph as your situation and goals change. Your strategy will be grounded in your assessment of what you do, why you do it, and where work fits into your vision of the good life. Your activities will link your goals to specific people, groups, and opportunities. While this focus on yourself and your needs may sound selfish and self-centered, more sales-oriented than collaborative, it is tempered by networking norms that stress cooperation, quality relationships, and mutual benefit.

Beginners often welcome the strict protocols of networking groups like BNI¹⁰ "that can teach them networking etiquette," or general-purpose networking groups that include a broad cross section of businesses and interests. As careers mature, people tend to focus more directly on niche activities or niche markets. Their networking choices shift to mirror their more focused goals. Or people create private groups where networking, learning, and leads are shared with close allies and clients.

Roger E. Barton doesn't participate in general networking groups anymore. He did initially when he looked to acquire clients through referrals; but now, he is focused on building his business by getting to know "end users"—

10. See discussion about BNI in Chapter 5.

potential clients. As with many expert networkers, his networking venues mirror his changing business focus.

Lenny Carraturo is a commercial business development officer at Wells Fargo Bank. Where once he joined general membership groups, he now wants to meet only accountants, attorneys, wealth advisors, and business owners who can introduce him to their clients who need access to his company's financial resources.

Sometimes a networker's strategic direction is influenced by outside forces that cause him/her to seek relationships with new groups. It could be

- A new law or regulation that will create changes for clients who benefit from your practice area, such as changes in immigration policies or changes in wage and hour, tax, or energy laws; or
- A trend that will impact your clients' lives, such as the effect of mobile devices on access to services, or the impact of ride-hailing services on the livelihood of traditional yellow cab drivers.

Often a person's networking strategy reflects career changes. Sometimes people move firms; other times they need to reinvent themselves if their practice areas dry up or they decide some other area is more interesting. Frequently, litigators, tired of litigation stress, shift their practice over to the more controllable areas of mediation and arbitration.

Changes may take place internally within your firm or company that cause you to modify your goals. For example,

- An increasing emphasis on a new practice area such as corporate security, social media, or privacy regulations;
- A decline in your practice area due to external economic conditions; or
- Your own interest in changing the focus of your practice.

Whatever the initiating opportunity, your networking strategy will need to mirror the change. You may need to spend time with different resources and people in your own network or meet new people through your colleagues' networks. Here are examples of a variety of activities that can be combined to implement new strategies:

- Events—attend conferences, meetings, meals.
- Participation—group leadership roles; speeches; working a room; providing thought leadership through blogs, articles, newsletters.
- Paying it forward—use your resource network and personal skill set to help others who will in turn help you.
- Connect with thought leaders in your network or your contacts' networks in order to learn about new areas and opportunities.

Pay It Forward

Regardless of the specific plans you use to convert contacts into friends, allies, colleagues, clients, mentors, or referral sources, successful networking pays it forward. It's less about getting something specific for yourself first and more about thinking of those with whom you network in terms of what *they* want and need, and how you can help *them* achieve their goals. Those who build a reputation as givers, in turn, get.

Larry Hutcher, co-managing partner of a midsize law firm, says, "I ask everyone I meet how I can help them. Then I listen closely, and often I can make a terrible situation less terrible. Good networkers are givers; give first and it will come back to you."

Marc W. Halpert, LinkedIn trainer and business entrepreneur, says the secret to networking success is "assessing what you can do for others before you let them know what they can do for you." He gets a psychic reward whenever he is "able to introduce two people who then do business together and together present a business opportunity to me."

Bernadette Beekman, attorney and Managing Director of Hire Counsel, doesn't like the term "networking." She prefers to call what she does "engagement and personal connections." She "likes people and finding out how I can help them." She defines the best networkers as people who are "fun, happy, pleasant, honest, authentic, and generous."

Interpersonal Relationships

Networking conversations offer a window into how people think and act. Good networkers understand what makes other people tick—what they need in order to create mutually beneficial affiliations. This is why attitude is more important than aptitude.

- Are you interested in the lives of other people?
- Are you interested in how other people build careers, families, and businesses?

If you are, you can be a good networker. Networking works best when you adopt an open mind marked by an interest in others and a willingness to share. Ivan Misner, the founder of BNI Network, notes that "this interest leads to comfort, and that comfort leads to opportunities to provide referrals as they arise, and those referrals lead to business."¹¹

11. Ibid.

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While you are getting to know people, they are getting to know you. This is especially true in the services world. Professional services become observable during interactions between the professional and the client. Even though service providers have tangible products, they are usually judged on the quality of the intangible shared experience—the chemistry between the provider and the client, the appropriateness of client service, and the value of the shared experience.

Many people believe that behavior in networking situations provides clues as to how those you interact with would be in a work situation.

Misner says, ‘[Networking] isn’t something you do to someone – it’s something you do with them. It’s a conversation.’¹²”

- If you listen attentively at a party it is assumed you are similarly attuned to your clients’ articulation of their needs.
- If you promise to send an article or schedule a breakfast and you do so in a timely manner, it is assumed that you are prompt in your business dealings.
- If you ask intelligent questions during a networking conversation, people assume you are a smart, experienced professional.

The skills and personal attributes that make a good networker are similar to the skills required to be a good professional, a good parent, a good colleague, a good friend. In all environments, success requires

- a psychological approach to dialogue—paying attention to what is said, how it is said and what is unsaid,
- research skills,
- the ability to construct pragmatic strategies around realistic goals,
- empathy—interest in and validation of others’ concerns,
- active listening skills,
- asking relevant questions,
- courtesy and good manners, and
- patience and a generosity of spirit—a willingness to listen for and hear the need buried in a conversation and tend to it.

12. Ivan Misner, “Why So Many People Resist Networking and Miss Out,” April 11, 2013, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/226359>.

Networking Time Is an Investment

Business development—networking, marketing, public relations—should be viewed as building blocks in your networking strategy. Your networking is an investment that provides a path to implement your goals. You build up from your goals by joining appropriate groups and planning one-on-one meetings with individuals you can help who can also help you.

As with financial investments, attaining a goal takes time. It may take several years to move from strangers shaking hands to colleague and trusted advisor. It may take 20 years, as a client of mine once explained. He met a potential client 20 years earlier and then faithfully kept in touch with the man. Fast forward 20 years and a young associate meets the man, identifies a solution to one of his current problems, and brings him into the firm as a client. My client said, “C’est la vie.”

Networking is a long-term strategy. It requires time to plan and time for the plans to come to fruition. The shift from stranger to friend, according to a study about friendship,

usually takes roughly 50 hours of time together to go from acquaintance to “casual friend” (think drinking buddies, or friends of friends that you see at parties); around 90 hours to become a true-to-form “friend” (you both carve out time to specifically hang out with one another); and over 200 hours to form a BFF-type bond (you feel an emotional connection with this friend).¹³

The strategic part of networking preparations takes time. For example, if you approach networking events as a three-part process [see Chapter 10], attendance at a networking meeting or event can take anywhere from three to six hours.

- Pre-activity research and personal preparation: one-half hour to one and one-half hours
- Travel to and from event: one to two hours
- The activity itself: one to two and one-half hours
- Follow-up: half an hour to an hour

Because each networking activity will take time to plan and time to implement, your selection of appropriate opportunities should be laser focused. All your networking choices should cumulatively move you toward your goals. This is the reason to adhere to your strategic networking plans.

Of course, sometimes an opportunity may seem perfect, and turn out to be less than it seemed. To mitigate the number of blind alleys you walk down, and

13. Patrick Allan, “It Takes 90 Hours to Make a New Friend,” April 10, 2018, <https://life-hacker.com/it-takes-90-hours-to-make-a-new-friend-1825145592>.

to make efficient use of your time, turn to your goals to create an underlying theme that links each initiative into a series of coordinated interactions.

The specific places you go and the people you target will evolve as you

- research the details about the activities and interests of your targets,
- identify people you wish to meet,
- find them,
- meet them,
- create relationships over time,
- form trust-based rapport with key individuals,
- help them move toward their goals, and
- accomplish your goals.

Sidebar 1.2 What Networking Is Not

- *Meetings are not networking.*
- *Lunch is not networking.*
- *Events are not networking, although networking may occur in any of these venues.*

Networking is not a specific tactic, nor does it need to happen only at a specific time and place.

It is not

- *selling,*
- *participating in random acts of lunch,*
- *speed-meeting,*
- *gathering the maximum number of business cards per meeting, or*
- *promoting your services like a used-car salesman.*

Many people who fear networking characterize it as

- *boring, a waste of time or a time suck,*
- *embarrassing,*
- *salesy,*
- *humdrum chit-chat, or*
- *wasted time away from work.*

Going Forward: Book Contents

The process begins by recognizing opportunities. In this book we discuss how to

- create a plan keyed to your goals;
- create networks of contacts;

- use networking tools, such as target personas, elevator speeches, and value propositions, to communicate your message to your target audience; and
- select from an array of venues—both online and in-person—that put you in touch with members of your target audience or people who can refer you to those targets.

We then look at important aspects of the networking process:

- the tangible and intangible preparations that precede networking initiatives;
- the etiquette of personal networking;
- the art of referrals; and
- best practices for integrating, evaluating, and measuring activities.

Guided by this information and advice from the expert networkers interviewed for this book, you will be able to develop your own set of comfortable networking activities and useful approaches.