

THE TOTAL YOU

Articles for Your Life



NETWORKING PLUS

No matter what level of business we achieve or what type of business we are in, the people we know helped get us there and they continue to help keep us there. I'm not talking about your secretary or assistant...I'm referring to our network.

A network is a group of people who we keep in touch with on some regular basis. These individuals may be peers, competitors or associates in your industry. The bottom line is you have an existing relationship, one in which you can utilize.

We seem to have been taught the art of business card collecting quite well. But, do we really know what to do with all those contacts and are we effectively working our network?

Instead of a traditional term of endearment like cupcake or sweetie pie, my husband fondly refers to me as the "Network Queen." Never before had he seen such a Christmas card list...over 900! "Do you know each and every one of these people?" he asked with great curiosity. Remarkably, I said, "Yes. At some level or another." It had taken me over 14 years to build my network, and I felt fortunate to know such a vast number and variety of individuals. It takes work, but you'll never regret the investment in a person.

Throughout the years, your network list will change, and you can't spend the same amount of energy on all people. You'll learn to discern and determine what level of involvement you should have with each person.

If the relationship doesn't bring you immediate financial/business results, don't worry, though. You will someday reap a harvest of the lives you touched. At the end of the road when it is all said and done, it will be the people who mattered, not the deals. It will be the relationships you treasured, not the sales commission. Go, build networks and prosper.

Some rules of thumb for building and strengthening your network so you can utilize it when necessary:

1. Always return calls promptly, regardless of position. You never know when Joe the janitor announces that he has saved enough money to start his own nationwide business, and he needs your services.
2. Never forget to thank people for their time. In an era of high tech gadgets that have freed us up to tackle more projects and work, people are pressed for time. Send a note immediately following a meeting. Cards are still appreciated although Email is instant for our fast paced society.
3. Follow up on details, requests or assignments even though someone else might have volunteered to contact you. Show initiative and excitement.
4. Get to know your network. Are they married? Do they have children? Pets? Then, record this information so you can begin to build a deeper relationship with them.

5. Be transparent and vulnerable when appropriate. In order for them to trust you, they will want to know you better. Share some of your interests and hobbies. Any time you can find a common interest, you have just created a lasting bond.
6. Remember your network and let them know you care by sending out birthday Ecards, congratulation notes for promotions or just a “thinking of you” card when they might be under the weather.
7. Share insightful and informative articles with key contacts. Make a copy and include your personal notes or comments. Forward on to them as an FYI expecting nothing in return.
8. Email funny jokes or cute Internet stories occasionally, but be sensitive to their Email volume.
9. Call periodically to update your network on what you are doing and find out how things are for them. Be in tune to challenges or needs they may have that you can assist them with.
10. Keep your word. If you promised to do something, do it. If you said you would call, call. Although it may appear that response standards have been lowered, give the level of service you would appreciate. The age old saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” still applies.
11. Under promise and over deliver. Any time you are given the opportunity to present your services or submit a proposal to a contact, make sure you are realistic. Don’t short change yourself, but ensure that you will provide good service for fair pay and meet or exceed their needs.

12. Attend trade shows. These are the perfect opportunity to meet new people. But once you gather the business cards, make sure you do something with them other than play “Go Fish.”
13. Enter new contacts into your database soon after you acquire it. Type in any notes that will help jog your memory as to what was discussed.
14. Send out a Thanksgiving mailer or Christmas card to your network. Tis the season to rejoice and thank God for all our gifts...our network being one.
15. Be sincere. No one likes a fake. You must earnestly desire to work with people and establish a network of individuals to whom you can associate with on a regular basis.

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*Lorraine Bossé-Smith is an author, speaker, coach and personal trainer who helps people across the country achieve their personal, fitness and professional goals. To learn more about your unique FIT (fitness individuality trait), you can take an exclusive personality assessment at www.thetotalyou.biz or pick up a copy of Lorraine's book, *Finally FIT: Customizing Fitness for Your Personality Type*, available at her website or www.Amazon.com*