HELPFUL

A Guide to Life, Careers and the Art of Networking

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For my fellow seekers...

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You are not an isolated entity, but a unique, irreplaceable part of the cosmos. Don't forget this. You are an essential piece of the puzzle of humanity. Each of us is a part of a vast, intricate, and perfectly ordered human community. But where do you fit into this web of humanity? To whom are you beholden?

Look for and come to understand your connections to other people. We properly locate ourselves within the cosmic scheme by recognizing our natural relations to one another and thereby identifying our duties. Our duties naturally emerge from such fundamental relations as our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, our state or nation. Make it your regular habit to consider your roles — parent, child, neighbor, citizen, leader — and the natural duties that arise from them. Once you know who you are and to whom you are linked, you will know what to do.

Epictetus, c. 55 – 135 AD

From The Art of Living, A New Interpretation by Sharon Lebell[1]

Preface
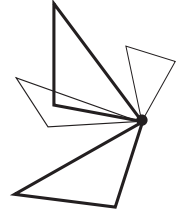
Give me a lever and a place to stand and I can move the world.

Archimedes

This is a book about professional networking. It is also a book about livelihoods, about some of the key differences between introverts and extraverts, and how to make a difference in the world. At its core it's a how-to manual for building your own tribe in a world where the people with whom we work — and the people with whom we *should be working* — are spread around the globe. In such a fast-moving, ever-changing environment, not networking is not an option.

This book grew out of my gradual awakening to the anemic nature of traditional networking. I had long known that I wasn't very good at networking, but I slowly came to the realization that most other people weren't very good at it, either. Compounding the issue was my eventual realization that the cultural norms surrounding networking were shallow and often backwards. I found most "networking" events to be utterly fruitless. For the life of me I couldn't figure out how screaming at someone in a noisy bar qualified as networking. I couldn't shake the nagging sense that something was missing. There had to be more to networking than that.

Our culture is laced with the conventional wisdom that networking is important. I had no reason to doubt this conventional wisdom, but what I was observing and experiencing didn't seem like networking to me. What I saw looked superficial. What I experienced felt awkward and unproductive.

So, I set out on a mission to develop an understanding of networking—an understanding that would work not only for me but also in our modern economy. As an amateur psychologist and an emerging coach, I also felt it was important to find an approach to networking that resonated across a range of personalities, preferences, and styles. I questioned everything and took nothing for granted. I wove together my knowledge of business and economics with my understanding of personality and the human mind to articulate an approach to networking that finally made sense to me. The results of my explorations are the ideas, principles, and techniques laid out in the pages ahead.

I hope that you find this approach to networking as compelling as I do. My wish is that you learn how to network effectively much earlier in your career than I did. It is critical to your success in your job, in your career, and in life.

Source Material

The research for this book comes through a lifetime of study, immersion, and intense observation. I draw upon a broad range of experiences encompassing my work as a seasoned leader, teacher, coach, and change-agent across multiple disciplines—including IT, HR, consulting, and volunteer organizations; across industries—such as health insurance, high tech, consulting, the public sector, and volunteer organizations; and spanning such companies as Cisco Systems, United Healthcare, Research in Motion, and the Pensions Department of the British Government.

I've led—and been led by—some amazing people. I've had the privilege to lead organizations as large as 250 people and manage a portfolio of projects with combined budgets in excess of $100 million. I have successfully overseen the delivery of numerous highly complex projects with a broad range of constituents and stakeholders. The pinnacle of all projects involved leading the update of 162,000 desktop and laptop computers from Windows 2000 to Windows XP.[2] Anyone who has tried to upgrade a *single* computer from one version of an operating system to the next can appreciate the complexity of multiplying

this by 162,000. After a rough start prior to my arrival, the upgrades proceeded over the course of nine months with minimal disruption.

Learning is my first love. In addition to reading widely on various topics, I have a master's degree in applied mathematics from Purdue University and an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley. I have also delighted in graduate-level courses in computer science, philosophy, psychology, and counseling. The logical precision of my mathematical training combined with the global perspective afforded by an MBA from a top-tier university fit perfectly with my passion for well-defined solutions that work across many contexts.

My nomadic lifestyle also forced me to learn about networking. While I have occasionally envied people who are grounded in a single place, my life has brought me across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. I have lived and worked in Southern Ontario, Canada, England, the American Midwest, the American Southwest, northern California, the Northeast, the mid-Atlantic South, and now, once again, in the Great Lakes Region. Each place was a crucible of learning, offering its own culture and lessons in how people and teams best work together.

My interests range from philosophy, epistemology, and psychology, to the grandeur and majesty of nature. I can engage deeply in topics as varied as team culture, economics, politics, logistics, complex systems, technology, movie and television production, and wine and craft cocktails. You are as likely to catch me reading a book on indigenous populations as on Steph Curry and the Golden State Warriors. Not surprisingly, most of these interests find their way into the ideas and techniques you'll discover in the following pages.

In 2007, as I moved away from the corporate world and pivoted to a career in leadership development and coaching, I began to share my approach to networking through talks, workshops, and webinars. My audiences—who, like me, wanted more from their lives and careers—became part of a virtuous feedback loop. Each presentation was a living laboratory that brought a little more insight and clarity.

Very quickly an amazing thing started to happen. People talked of light bulbs going off in their heads as I reframed their thinking on

professional relationships. They breathed a sigh of relief as I set them free to be themselves. They incorporated my techniques to improve their networking both inside and outside of their organizations.

Mostly, they encouraged me to tell more people. And so, after more than ten years of development, dozens of talks and presentations, and hundreds of hours of one-on-one coaching, here we are: a book about networking, careers, team dynamics, professional relationships, and, in many ways, life.

The Road Ahead

The journey that we are about to undertake comprises four distinct segments. In *Part I — Preparation,* I make the case for networking and tell how it grew out of my life experience and my ineptitude at savvy networking. I explore several contrasts along the spectrum of introversion and extraversion. Understanding your preferences along this spectrum, as well as learning to recognize the preferences of others, is crucial to all of the work that follows. Throughout the book I encourage you to develop an approach to networking that melds deeply with your style and the personality preferences that shape who you are.

In *Part II — The Networking Mindset,* I define how to *think* about networking. In Chapter 6, we'll explore the essence of a network. Then, in Chapter 7, we'll build on this notion and define networking as an active and invigorating way of engaging with the world. With a pragmatic definition of networking, we'll then explore how to quickly move through the banalities of small-talk to engage deeply in a way that helps to build mutually beneficial relationships.

In *Part III — Networking in Action,* we take our newfound ideas and put them into practice across scenarios ranging from one-on-one meetings to conferences and large events. We also explore how to leverage the power of LinkedIn, and other social media, to build and maintain your network.

Finally, in *Part IV — Networking at Work,* I show how our basic mindset of networking can work within organizations to become an invaluable career tool and a transformational cultural norm. In our

modern, complex world you simply must have a robust network if you want to have any kind of career success. I will argue that, beyond individual success, if a critical mass of individuals within an organization embrace the networking mindset, they will create a culture of collaboration that most companies only dream about.

Move the World

Your network is a powerful tool that you begin creating early in your career and carry with you for the rest of your life. It stays with you from job to job and career to career. It is entirely your own creation, and no one can take it away from you. If you do it well, you can build a network that becomes your tribe — *the people to whom you are loyal and who, you trust, are loyal to you.*

My goal is to not only help you understand how to build and maintain a network but also to enable you to leverage that network for all its power. Archimedes, often considered the father of physics, understood the power of leverage. He said, "Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the world." The place to stand is where you are standing now, wherever you happen to be in your career and in your life. The lever is your network, the interconnected web of relationships that you build and maintain over the course of your career.

You are part of something larger than yourself. You are a member of a family, a community, a country, an economy. You are part of the body politic. And you are part of the human race. Each of those realms offers an obligation and an opportunity for you to make your mark. Join me in embracing this approach to networking. As each of us builds our individual networks, we become ever more interconnected. The result will be a vast human network with enough leverage and force to move the world many times over.

I have a dream of making the world a better place to work. Join me in embracing the world with a spirit of helpfulness. Your career — and our world — depends on it.

To our success…

Part I
Preparation For Our Journey
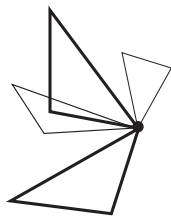
Chapter 1

First Principles
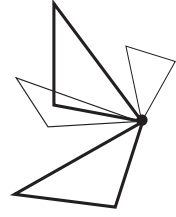
*Principles could be seen as the soil that
derive from the bedrock of values.*

George Monbiot[3]

How we see the world derives from what we are capable of seeing. While that may sound like a tautology, what I mean is that in most cases, we can only see what we are looking for. Over the years we develop a base of principles, values, and beliefs that shape what we see and how we comprehend the world. These principles and beliefs become a lens through which we experience the world.

As we begin our journey into networking, I owe it to you to first illuminate where I'm coming from. I have two principles that underlie everything we are going to talk about. Upon these "first principles" I will lay a mindset that frames our understanding of networking. Then, with a fresh mindset, I will put forth practical and sensible tools and techniques that you can use to become master networkers.

Everything in this book builds on these fundamental principles. If you find they resonate with your values, then I invite you to read on. If you see the world through a lens like mine, then what I have to offer will make tremendous sense, and you will find much here to enhance your life and bolster your career.

1. We Are All Interconnected

It is often said that humans are social creatures. Very true. But we are much more than merely social. Humans are a thoroughly interconnected

species. This deep interconnectedness has enabled a phenomenal degree of interdependence. As we move through our lives, we weave in and out of a web of dependencies on myriad levels: physical, emotional, social, economic, and political.

- **Physical:** Evidence indicates the existence of mirror neurons in our brains that fire when we observe behaviors in others. Our brains behave as if we were the ones acting.[4]

- **Emotional:** We are interconnected through our empathic capacity to understand and share the feelings of others.*

- **Social:** Aristotle was the first to declare that humans are social animals.† Over the millennia since his keen insight, we have come to explore and understand the true power of this interconnectedness. In his recent book, *The Secret of Our Success,* Joseph Henrich shows that our collective intelligence, our ability to learn from one another, and our cumulative history have enabled us to produce sophisticated languages, complex institutions, and amazing technologies. Alone, we stand naked against the elements. Together, the human race has come to dominate the globe more than any other species has.[5]

- **Economic:** The food we eat, every object we touch, every product we buy, every public service we use has come to us through a vast network of interconnected people. Despite what we often hear in the public and political spheres, there is no such thing as a "self-made" person. We are interconnected and interdependent.

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* I readily admit that not everyone has the capacity for empathy. Some estimate that as many as 4% of the population lack it completely. See *The Sociopath Next Door* by Martha Stout, Ph.D., for a fascinating exploration of sociopathy and its implications.

† "Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god." Aristotle, *Politics.*

- **Political:** In democratic societies, we individually decide how we want to be led and collectively exercise our democratic privileges to elect the people who lead us.

2. People Want to Be Helpful

The second principle that guides us on this journey is that people want to be helpful. They really do! Human beings are an incredibly altruistic species. I cannot possibly explain it any better than George Monbiot does in his insightful and hopeful book, *Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for an Age of Crisis*:

> *By the age of fourteen months, children begin to help each other, attempting to hand over objects another child cannot reach. By the time they are two, they start sharing some of the things they value. By the age of three, they start to protest against other people's violations of moral norms.*
>
> *We are also, among mammals (with the possible exception of the naked mole rat), the supreme cooperators. We evolved in the African savannahs: a world of fangs and claws and horns and tusks. We survived despite being weaker and slower than both our potential predators and most of our prey. We did so through developing, to an extraordinary degree, a capacity for mutual aid. As it was essential to our survival, this urge to cooperate was hard-wired into our brains through natural selection. It has not been lost.[6]*

Building mutually beneficial relationships that leverage the interconnectedness of our being and the intersection of our talents, knowledge, and networks is what brings success and will ultimately move humanity forward.

Chapter 2
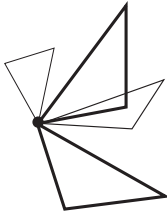
An Introvert's Journey

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble.
It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.

Unknown

We have an odd relationship with the concept of networking. We all seem to know it's important, but few of us seem to know how to do it well. I see many people going through the motions, but few give much thought to what they are doing. While there's no shortage of meet-ups and networking events, the return on our investment of time and energy in those events is disappointing. Many of us are at a loss when it comes to building powerful, professional relationships.

Our relationship with networking is not unlike our cultural relationship with dancing. Dancing is a joyous, often visceral activity. However, it is assumed that everyone *can* dance and that everyone enjoys doing so. That is far from the case.

Think back to the last time you were at an event that featured dancing—perhaps a recent wedding. Take your mind back to that dance floor and remember what you saw there.

My guess is that you saw a wide variety of skill and movement:

- There were, no doubt, a few people who were exceptionally good dancers. Their bodies were at one with the music, moving with the rhythm, naturals on the dance floor. These people were in their element and were enjoying themselves.

- There were a fair number of people—perhaps the majority—who were just okay dancers. They bobbed and

wove in predictable, repeatable patterns. Occasionally they lost the beat, paused, and reset. It's not clear if they were enjoying themselves, but they had succumbed to social pressures and made themselves get out on the floor just the same.

- There were a small number of people who were simply bad dancers. They flailed around the dance floor as if they had just been stung by a hive of bees. They knew they weren't very good at dancing and, proudly, didn't seem to care.

- Finally, there were the wallflowers — the people who knew they weren't very good dancers and made the conscious choice to keep off the floor. Some were shy, just waiting to be asked. Others were honest enough to know that they would not enjoy themselves in any way if they so much as set foot on the dance floor.

I have long considered myself a proud member of the Wallflower Club when it comes to dancing. No apologies. No shame. So my intention is in no way to cast aspersions on people's dancing skills — far from it. Dancing is a physical manifestation of our love of music and our joy at being alive. Let your body move. However, dancing is an apt metaphor for our modern approach to networking. And while our individual talents for dancing have little impact on our careers, networking matters deeply to our individual success and, as we shall see, the success of our teams and organizations.

To see some of the parallels between dancing and networking, consider the dancers in the first group, the extraordinary dancers. We often marvel at their talents without giving much thought to how they got to be so good. The truth is, they weren't born that way. They might have been blessed with some natural rhythm and a desire to move, but they were not born good dancers. Whether they took formal dancing lessons, studied YouTube videos in the privacy of their living rooms,[7] or simply practiced their hearts out, they deliberately set out to be good. They invested the time and the effort necessary to learn how to become great dancers.

The world of networking and professional relationships has much the same categories of people. In general, networking skills are all over the map. Interpersonal abilities range from seemingly invisible wallflowers and ineffective flailing to sublime connectors who seem to know everyone and are always willing to share what they know or make an introduction. And, like dancing, the master networkers were not born that way. The best networkers invested the time and the effort to learn how to connect with people, how to listen, and how to be helpful. Along the way, they built a web of professional relationships that nourishes their careers, extends its reach with each new connection, and increases in power with each passing day.

I started on the networking dance floor as a wallflower—with occasional forays into ineffective flailing. Over the course of too many years, I slowly awoke to the rich world of professional relationships that was missing from my career and my life. Determined to be a better networker, I was relieved to discover that my shortcomings were neither genetically determined nor culturally preordained. Instead, while I had much to learn about social skills, the real problem was that the conventional wisdom on networking was upside down and backwards. I am nowhere near a sublime connector yet, but I have found a perspective and approach for networking that makes it easy and natural.

My Story

In many ways, I am an unlikely candidate to be teaching about professional networking. Although I have come to embrace the intentional act of networking as an essential skill for success in the twenty-first century, there was a time when the mere thought of talking about myself—and especially small talk—practically paralyzed me. I accepted my ineptness at networking as my fate. You play the hand you're dealt, I thought. Much later in life, I figured out that the hand you are dealt isn't nearly as important as the game in which you choose to play it. I learned to deal myself into a different game, one for which the hand I was dealt is much better suited.

I did not grow up with a strong need for social skills. My childhood home was rural, along a river in Southern Ontario, Canada. My combined elementary and middle school was small: six classrooms spanning eight grades serving fewer than 200 students. Extracurricular and after-school activities were rare. I spent more time playing in the nearby woods and along the river than I ever did interacting with other people.

Nor were social skills among the many gifts my parents passed on to me. My folks were simple, hard-working people. During my youth my mom labored through shift work as a nursing assistant. My dad was a bricklayer and made his living in the brutal outdoor world of building and construction in our often-harsh northern clime. The closest my parents ever came to offering career advice was when my dad suggested that I read Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People.**

Most important, I accepted my fate as a sub-par networker because I am an introvert. If you gave me the option to stay home with a good book versus going out with a group of people… well… I'd take the deal—even if it meant being stuck with a *bad* book. I fell for the misconception that introverts can't be good networkers. Although I sensed that my aversion to social activity was a liability, I figured, "It is what it is." As Popeye always says, "I yam what I yam."[8]

Tired of the cold winters, which wreak havoc on a bricklayer's hands, my father took us from one extreme to the other. The summer after my sophomore year in high school, he sold our country home in the cool climates of Southern Ontario, Canada and moved our family to the desert heat of Lake Havasu City, Arizona. For my introduction to America, I found myself an early settler in a planned and promoted city in the middle of the Mojave Desert.[9]

The disruption caused by moving from a bucolic life along a quiet river in Canada to an enterprising outpost in the desert Southwest shaped my understanding of America. It started a nomadic adventure that continues to this day. I have had the good fortune to live in

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* Looking back, I realize now that my father was on to something. I wish I had listened to him.

numerous cities and communities in eight states across the US as well as a brief return to work in Canada and a two-year stint in the UK.

Despite my lack of networking skills, I did okay for the first half of my career. I completed college in Indiana and started my twenties as a high-school math teacher in a nearby town. I left high-school teaching after two years and wrapped up the decade working on a couple of graduate degrees, including a master's degree in applied mathematics, which I completed, and a master's in philosophy, which I did not. As I approached my thirtieth birthday I found myself in Denver, Colorado, studying philosophy and counseling. While Colorado embodies a majestic corner of the world, it was rapidly becoming clear to me that the life of a perpetual student left much to be desired, not the least of which was health care. A friend had just started in an entry-level position at an insurance company and paved the way for an interview. To my relief, they hired me.

My initial foray into the corporate world went deceptively well. My ability to contribute was almost instantly recognized and appreciated. I moved up quickly. Within a year I was offered a relocation to Albuquerque, and three years later I transferred to San Francisco. My newfound corporate career seemed to be on the fast track.

I arrived in San Francisco in the mid 1990s. The technology revolution was in full swing and the spirit of the original 49ers filled the air[10]—only this time we weren't searching for gold. We were inventing the future. I moved on from the insurance company in due time and joined the throngs of tech-heads who were changing jobs and companies every couple of years. I eventually landed at Cisco Systems on the eve of Y2K. It was a booming company at the leading edge of the technology revolution.

Unfortunately, the tech revolution was overheating and the dot-com bubble[11] was about to burst. Around the same time, it was becoming clear that my career had hit the doldrums as well. Despite good performance reviews and a great boss, advancement eluded me. All I ever seemed to get for doing good work was more of the same: new assignments that looked much like the old assignments. I felt invisible…and stuck.

Naturally, I did what any mid-career, forty-something professional in a rut would do: I decided to go back to school. I was accepted into the Evening MBA program at UC Berkeley and dedicated myself to my studies. My intuitive and introverted mind was in heaven as I immersed myself in the expansive worlds of macroeconomics, business and public policy, and organizational behavior. Business school was an exciting peek behind the curtain at how the business world really worked.

Unbeknownst to me at the time, most people pursue MBA degrees for three reasons: the content of the courses, the credibility of the institution, and the network. While I lapped up the course material, and was humbled to have been admitted to the hallowed halls of such a credible institution, I was naïve to the power of the network I had so innocently joined. My classmates, however, quickly brought me up to speed. People couldn't stop talking about how excited they were to be a part of the Berkeley Alumni Network.

As the reality of their words sunk in, it was as if a thousand dormant desert flowers had just been splashed with a spring rain. Eureka! Being part of a network was the missing ingredient in my career. While my preference for introversion and, more important, my lack of social skills had caught up with me, fate had smiled on me once again. The answer was right in front of me: networking was the key ingredient missing from my career.

It didn't take long to figure out that being back in school offered a very brief window to learn and master networking — the essential skill I knew I lacked. I committed myself to learn networking with the same gusto that I was learning economics. I was soon a regular at every class mixer, bar-of-the-week, pub-of-the-month, and Friday afternoon social I could find.

At first it was fun. The energy — not to mention some of the refreshments — was intoxicating. However, I still had this nagging sense that something was missing. Was this it? For the life of me I couldn't figure out how screaming to be heard in a noisy bar qualified as networking. It was all but impossible to have a meaningful conversation in a room where the combined conversations were so loud that I couldn't

even hear myself think. At best, we were enjoying the beer, exchanging pleasantries, and performing the gratuitous exchange of business cards. There had to be more to networking than that.

I retreated and regrouped. Despite my misgivings about some of the activities billed as "networking events," I knew intuitively that networking was the missing key to career success. For years I had been a wallflower, fading into the background and hoping that my good work would speak for itself, all the while ignoring the importance of networking and building relationships. When I finally stepped onto the dance floor, I was ill prepared. I found myself flailing to a beat that I either could not hear or did not understand.

Undeterred, I continued to participate, watch, and learn. I had gone into this knowing I wasn't very good at networking. It would take me another five years before it would finally dawn on me that other people weren't that good at it, either.

This was a huge revelation. Most networkers looked like the mediocre dancers on the dance floor: they missed steps, they missed beats, and they didn't seem to care. Granted, they had the social courage to get themselves out on the dance floor in the first place, but very few of them appeared to know what they were doing.
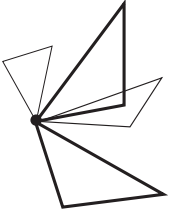
And yet, there were those few shining stars — the master networkers who could work a room with grace and aplomb. They were magnets, and hubs, and amplifiers. They made introductions and they got introduced. They moved effortlessly through a room.

As I learned about — and from — these master networkers, I realized that networking skills were a subset of social skills. And I knew that there was nothing magic about social skills. They are neither genetic nor innate. Social skills are learned. Most of us, if we're lucky, are blessed with caring adults in our lives who instill social skills in us from an early age. The master networkers I was seeing had simply had the good fortune to learn networking skills earlier in their career.

I was relieved to conclude that good networking was not natural; it was learned. And if there was one thing I was good at, it was learning. I set off in search of an answer to the simple question, "What is networking?"

I mean, really, what *IS* networking? I was confident I knew what it wasn't: standing in noisy bars screaming to be heard. But it would take a bit of a journey to figure out what networking was — and more important, what networking was *for me.*

The rest of this book is a travelogue of sorts. I share my stories and insights from my journey to discover networking, in the hope that you will wake to the power of networking much earlier in your career than I did. If enough of us start embracing the world with this new mindset, we just might make a dent in the universe. At the very least, we'll make the world a better place to work.

Chapter 3

Know Thyself

Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.

Unknown[12]

As we begin our journey into the world of networking, the first step is a little self-exploration. Networking is a deeply personal endeavor. As such, before we can learn how to build mutually beneficial relationships, we need to get a clearer sense of our personal style, how we prefer to communicate, and *where* we think. In so doing, I hope that you will gain a better understanding not only of yourself but also the art of identifying — and adapting to — the styles and preferences of others.

This is not a book specifically *for* introverts. While I am confident that most introverts will find it invaluable, it will be equally valuable to people with a preference for extraversion. I contrast introverts and extraverts not to appeal to any particular preference but to highlight that people respond to other people in different ways. As a result, different people should network differently. One of the biggest social mistakes we make is to assume that other people think and communicate the same way we do. Nowhere is this more pronounced than along the introvert-extravert spectrum. I cringe every time I see an article about networking that does not factor in the fundamental differences between introverts and extraverts, as if the same four bullet points on "how to network" apply to everyone universally.

It is impossible to overstate how important it is for you to find your own approach to networking. In my experience, the networking styles most effective for introverts are markedly different from those typically embraced by extraverts. We are both right. Building and maintaining

professional relationships that are mutually beneficial is a lifelong journey. My intention is that you will be able to find a style within these pages that's right for you.

A Note on Terms

I am often asked about my choice to spell the word as "extravert" rather than "extrovert." While the differences might be subtle, "extravert" and "extrovert" are two different words. In general usage, an "extrovert" refers to a gregarious and unreserved person *(Merriam-Webster).* The word "extravert"—as originally coined by Carl Jung—refers to "someone whose attention and interests are directed wholly or predominantly toward what is outside the self" *(Merriam-Webster Unabridged).* This makes sense, given that in Latin, "extra" means outside and "vertere" means to turn. So, an "extravert" turns outward.

I use "extravert" because the term, used extensively in the psychology literature, more closely describes the personality dimensions that are helpful for understanding how to build and maintain relationships with people. When relating to people, it is important to know whether a person's attention is focused inward or outward. Whether they are gregarious or unreserved is an entirely different matter, and I have met both introverts and extraverts who display these characteristics. Hence, I will use the terms introvert and extravert for the opposite ends of this highly relevant Myers-Briggs spectrum. For further exploration of the etymology and use of both words, see the brilliant entry "Extrovert or extravert?" on *The Grammarphobia Blog.*[13]

Myths of Extraversion

Some of the biggest challenges in building and maintaining relationships emerge in the gaps and misunderstandings between introverts and extraverts. There's a popular myth, particularly in US culture, that extraverts are better networkers than introverts. Or perhaps you've seen the unfortunate corollary to this myth, aimed specifically at the shy and/or introverted, naively counseling them simply to be more extraverted to be a better networker.

I count at least two implicit — and deeply flawed — assumptions in these simplistic and misguided assertions. First, these myths assume that what we see extraverts doing in social situations is, in fact, networking. I have no doubt that extraverts often *think* they are better networkers. I also have no doubt that many extraverts believe the way they are interacting with others constitutes networking. Too often they are the ones who look like the inept dancer on the dance floor flailing and floundering, always a half-beat out of sync with the music.

To be fair, people with a preference for extraversion start from a good place in the networking arena. Extraverts have a natural propensity to be congenial and talkative. They connect easily with other people and often have a broad base of acquaintances. Further, many extraverts are continuously on the lookout for new people and are generous about making introductions. However, when it comes to building mutually beneficial relationships, these behaviors are just table stakes. In and of themselves, they are not necessarily networking.

Networking skills are simply a subset of social skills, and social skills are learned — they are not natural to anyone. Where you fall on the introvert-extravert spectrum is separate and independent of your proficiency as a networker. Some extraverts have learned networking skills; many have not. Same for introverts. Both introverts and extraverts can learn networking skills equally well, although each will manifest those skills quite differently.

The second assumption implicit in the assertion that better networking simply requires one to be more extraverted is that there is only *one way* to network: the way that we see most extraverts networking. Reality is much more nuanced — and freeing — than that. There are an infinite variety of ways to network — as infinite as the combination of people, personality types, and preferences. The key is to find an approach that works for you and a style that leverages your strengths and preferences.

What's the Difference?

In the last few years a cornucopia of well-written books and articles have articulated and differentiated the styles and preferences of introverts and extraverts. Susan Cain's work appears to have been the tipping point. Her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*[14] was amplified by her very popular TED Talk.[15] With her tireless efforts to raise awareness, Susan seems to have pushed aversion to introversion past a tipping point, moving it from the murky shadows of a perceived malady and into the limelight of normalcy. It seems that America has finally embraced the fact that introversion and extraversion simply reflect different preferences and styles for interacting with the world, while having no bearing on intelligence, talent, potential, ambition, ability to contribute, or any other ill-conceived category that the world uses to measure success.

We can't begin to cover all the differences between introverts and extraverts, so we'll dig into a few that are most relevant to networking and interacting with others. First, let me be clear by what I *don't* mean by introvert and extravert.

By "introvert" I do not mean someone who is shy, averse to social contact, or misanthropic. Shyness is different from introversion. Shyness encompasses a fear of social disapproval and humiliation. While there is a slight correlation between shyness and introversion, shyness afflicts both introverts and extraverts. For both camps, shyness and social anxiety can often be overcome by determination and learning key social skills.[16]

I used to be shy. Then I taught myself the social skills that help me to effectively interact with people. I started by focusing on building a professional network and have been delighted to discover that my newfound social skills enhance all my relationships, not just the professional ones. I am no longer afraid of being rejected. My shyness has ebbed. I will, however, always have a deep preference for introversion.

Likewise, by "extravert" I do not mean a person who is bubbly, gregarious, or someone who always seeks to be the center of attention. I am thinking here of the bubbly store clerk who chirps, "How are you

this fine day?" when you walk into the store. Overt gregariousness is not extraversion; it is a learned social skill. While these behaviors may correlate slightly to a preference for extraversion, they are by no means limited to extraverts, and they certainly do not define extraversion. They are learned behaviors.

So, what *do* I mean by introversion and extraversion? For our purposes, I'll look at two key elements along the introvert-extravert spectrum: what stimulates us and how our thought processes work.

What Do You Find Stimulating?

The most common aspects of the introvert-extravert spectrum usually relate to what people find energizing or stimulating. Many will suppose that the difference between introverts and extraverts centers on where you get your energy. It is commonly portrayed that extraverts get their energy from being with other people, while introverts get their energy from being alone. There is some truth to this, but it's too simple. The real differences are more nuanced. A better understanding comes when we look not at *where* we get our energy but at *what* we find stimulating—and, by contrast, by looking at what we find destimulating or draining.

Extraverted Stimulation

Drawn to the external realms of activities and people, extraverts are stimulated by the external world. They find the background conversation of a coffee shop or the buzz of a crowded bar invigorating. Conversations with other people are inherently energizing regardless of the subject. Further, most extraverts are drawn to striking up a conversation—which they find stimulating—with just about anyone they meet.

Just the sound of conversations or music in the background can be stimulating to an extravert. An extravert will often go to a coffee shop, not necessarily to speak with anyone but to soak in the energy she derives from the hum of music and multiple conversations in the

background. At home, extraverts are the ones who often have the television on "just for background noise," they'll say.

Introverted Stimulation

Introverts, on the other hand, get their stimulation internally — from their inner world of thoughts, ideas, and feelings. I can speak from my own experience here: as an introvert, I am constantly thinking, processing, wondering, imagining, and connecting dots. I may have a half-dozen trains of thought running through my head *at the same time.* My quiet demeanor may betray the vibrant mental activity taking place just below the surface. Still waters run deep.

Carl Jung, who popularized the terms *introvert* and *extravert* as the central building blocks of personality, said that introverts focus on the meaning they make of the events swirling around them; extraverts plunge into the events themselves.[17] Introverts want to understand the world in order to experience it, whereas extraverts want to experience the world in order to understand it.

Earlier, I joked that, given the choice of going out with a group of people or staying home with a good book, I would opt to stay home, even if that meant staying home with a *bad* book. This makes more sense now that you understand what introverts find stimulating. Even with a bad book — perhaps especially with a bad book — my mind is active. With each painful paragraph and lame plot twist, I am rewriting the story in my head. Such activity is, in itself, stimulating. Although it can sometimes be embarrassing to admit, even a bad book can be stimulating to an introvert.

People often say that introverts prefer to be alone. This is not quite accurate. It depends on whether an introvert can also engage their mind. A day full of mindless, tedious tasks can be highly draining for an introvert. The key is for their brain to be engaged. Being alone is not necessarily stimulating. Thinking is stimulating.

There are plenty of occasions when I have been alone all day but bogged down in mundane tasks. On such days I am far from energized at the end of the day. Stimulation is independent of the presence of

people. If I am doing mindless or administrative tasks, then I can be drained of energy even when working alone.

Whether or not other people are involved, introverts prefer to be in a mental place where their minds are active with ideas. At any given time, a rich world of thoughts and ideas is active in our minds. Being alone just gives us the freedom to control the thoughts. We can be equally stimulated if we are engrossed in conversation in a small group.

Large groups, on the other hand, are rarely our sweet spot. The din of a large crowd can be physically stressful, raising the cortisol[18] levels in our bloodstreams. And regardless of the group size, mindless chatter and prolonged small talk are always draining to an introvert.

Introverts find background noises distracting. I sometimes enjoy the quiet buzz of background conversations in a coffee shop, but I would never be able to do any work there that involved concentration or deep thinking.

Any noise in the background — especially conversations and human voices — comes at the expense of our ability to concentrate. If I am trying to think, I must sacrifice a portion of my mental energy just to filter out the background noises and let my mind work. The recent trend away from open office spaces[19] is an encouraging acknowledgment that introverts — about half of the population — cannot do their best work in an environment where they must expend mental energy to filter out background distractions.

Where Do You Think?

Where we get our energy is undoubtedly among the most popular framing of the differences between introverts and extraverts. However, it is not the most significant characteristic on this spectrum, especially when it comes to networking and relationships. In my professional opinion, the most profound and defining difference between introverts and extraverts is *where* we think. That is an odd phrase, "where we think." We don't often consider our thought processes as having a spatial dimension. And yet, our thoughts most certainly develop and exist in space.

Extraverted Thinking

In general—and this should come as no surprise—extraverts tend to think externally, by which I mean they need to verbalize their thoughts for them to be fully formed. Let me say that again. For an extravert, thoughts are primarily formed *as they are verbalized.* It's as if the ideas are taking shape in little thought bubbles a few inches in front of their faces.

I'm not saying that extraverts are incapable of deep thought or forming thoughts unless their mouths are moving. However, until an extravert has a chance to verbalize their thoughts, the ideas will not be fully formed, at least to their satisfaction. They need to verbalize their thoughts to fully form them. They speak to think.

I am certain that you have experienced this phenomenon. Think back to a classroom experience at some time in your life. When the teacher asked a question, it seemed as if half of the students raised their hands before she even finished the question. How could this be? Having spent significant time in classrooms over the course of my life, this behavior mystified me for years. How could they know what they were going to say so quickly? Much later, I finally discovered that the people whose hands instantly shot up were the extraverts. They didn't always know what they were going to say the moment they raised their hands. However, they trusted that the thoughts would form if they were just given the opportunity to speak them. They wanted to be selected so that they could speak—and therefore think—through the answer. That is, an extravert will speak it to think it.

Introverted Thinking

Introverts, on the other hand, prefer that their thoughts be more fully formed *before* they speak. An introvert will sit quietly, listening, pondering, and mulling ideas over in her head, looking for the right word and the best description of the ideas that are taking shape. When I realized that teachers and bosses were judging my participation by the amount that I talked, I wanted to scream, "I am participating! I'm listening."

Introverts form their thoughts internally, and most of the time they are happy to leave them there. They have no compelling need to verbalize their thoughts. Anne Frank captured this preference well when she said, "I've been doing a great deal of thinking, but not saying much."[20]

Unfortunately, this can put introverts at a disadvantage in many classrooms and work situations. In class, as well as in meetings and most social situations, the introverts are the ones who are usually sitting quietly, listening, and thinking. If they raise their hand or speak at all, they will rarely be the first ones to do so. Teachers often misjudge "class participation" based on who raises their hand and speaks in class. Rest assured, the introverts are participating; they're listening and they're thinking. An introvert may look like they are not involved — or worse, look as if they are not interested — when, in fact, the mental wheels are actively spinning.

Leveraging Introverted Thinking

I once had a job in the public sector working for the Pensions Department of the British Government. My boss was one of the most brilliant people for whom I have ever worked. Kenny had come from a top-tier consulting firm. The task before us was a significant transformation project of our large, public-sector IT organization. We faced an endless stream of complex problems to be solved and decisions to be made. These challenges made for frequent, robust conversations.

Kenny was also one of the most extraverted people I have ever met. Ideas would come pouring out of his mouth, emergent and partially formed, at an incredible pace. We would engage in the most intense and stimulating conversations until, inevitably, I would reach a point where I needed more time to process and form my thoughts. While Kenny was talking, I wasn't thinking. I needed to "have a think" as the British like to say. I would bookmark my place in the conversation by saying, "Kenny, I have a brilliant answer for you… and I'll be back in two hours to tell you what it is."

I strongly encourage introverts to put this notion in the top drawer of their communications toolbox. As introverts, it falls on us to teach

people how to bring out our best by assuring them that we have more to add to the conversation but that we need more time to process our thoughts. It's important that you deliberately circle back to continue the conversation once you have more to say. When they see that you will return with much more to add, they will begin to encourage you to take the time you need to deepen and formalize your thoughts.

Kenny was an experienced manager and savvy on the differences between introverts and extraverts. He knew that if he let me go away and process my ideas in my optimal way, I would come back and add even more to the conversation. And if, for some reason, I didn't make it back in the promised time, he knew to come looking for me. Savvy extraverts know that there is gold buried in the minds of quiet introverts. Sometimes you must go digging for it.

This lack of understanding between how and where introverts and extraverts think creates one of the greatest underutilized resources in our teams and organizations. Introverts have a tremendous ability to think, process, come up with ideas, and solve problems. Unfortunately, when we assume that everyone thinks in the same fundamental way, many of these ideas remain in the minds of introverts, undeveloped and/or unspoken. The best thinking of introverts and extraverts happens in diametrically opposed environments. Extraverts process deeply in the *presence* of external stimulation, where they can think and verbalize their ideas with other people. Introverts process deeply in the *absence* of external stimulation, especially in the absence of other people talking. Can you see the conflict? When one group is thinking, the other group must essentially shut down their thought processes. Only one of the two ends of the spectrum can function optimally in any one environment.

Not only do introverts need time to incubate their ideas, they generally feel no compulsion to speak them. They are quite happy to leave the thoughts fully formed — but not verbalized — in their minds, available for cross-pollination with new ideas or for connections with dots yet to be discovered. The number of ideas that go unarticulated can be a great loss to teams and relationships.

Socially skilled introverts know how to bridge this gap between introverted and extraverted colleagues. They push themselves to circle back and continue the conversation, adding their thoughts to the group dialogue as they form and mature over time. At the same time, savvy extraverts will know to give introverts the time they need to think and then call on them again (and again) to reveal the ideas that have been forming.

In the workplace these different preferences manifest in myriad ways. An extravert will naturally exhibit a preference for phone calls and face-to-face meetings as their most effective communication format. Their tolerance for long, detailed emails, on the other hand, will be limited. I've seen anecdotes of leaders whose proposed solution to the rising crush of email is to admonish their employees to "just pick up the phone." Some even go as far as declaring email off limits on certain days of the week. Such a company is likely run by a leader with a strong preference for extraversion.

An introvert, on the other hand, will have a stronger preference for email, where they can work out their ideas in advance. Not surprisingly, introverts often have a strong aversion to talking on the phone. Drafting and editing an email allows an introvert to work through his thoughts and more fully organize them before hitting "send." Introverts are famous for composing detailed — and well thought out — emails comprising thousands of words, only to send them to an extravert who sees the density of the text, scans the first paragraph, and picks up the phone to ask for an explanation. If you're an introvert, refrain from email manifestos and white papers when a brief "executive summary" would do. Extraverts, when you receive one of these essays, take the time to read what has been written. You just may be surprised by the brilliance and insight of the email's author.

Compare and Contrast

If an extravert has important work to do, it would not be unusual to hear them say, "Boy, do I ever have a big project to work on. Do you mind if I put some music on?" An introvert in the same situation might

say, "Man, I have a big project to work on. Do you mind if I turn the music *off?*" Here are a few more interesting contrasts between introverts and extraverts:

Introverts	Extraverts
Oriented inward	Oriented outward
Reflective, reserved, low-key	Active, congenial
Quiet, calm, enjoy solitude	Enthusiastic, energetic, lively
Thoughts more fully formed before they are spoken	Speak thoughts to form them
Learn by reading, study, reflection, mental practice	Learn from others, by doing
Favor written communications, email	Favor face-to-face communications, telephone
More likely to be introduced than to introduce themselves	Easily connect with other people
Maintain a limited range of relationships	Enjoy associations with a wide variety of people and groups

Caveats and Clarifications

One could spend a lifetime exploring the subtleties and nuances of introversion and extraversion. Because of their relevance to interpersonal relationships, I have focused on just two distinct qualities: how people are energized or stimulated and where people's thought processes take place. Before we delve into how all this applies to networking, a few clarifications are in order.

It's a Spectrum

The differences between the preferences for introversion and extraversion lie along a broad spectrum. In illuminating some of those key differences, I refer to the very ends of the spectrum. Few people fall at these extreme ends. Everyone is, to some degree, an ambivert.

It's a Preference

In Myers-Briggs parlance, introversion and extraversion are preferences, not labels. We do not tag people as introverts or extraverts. Instead, we say that someone has a *preference* for introversion or a *preference* for extraversion. We may even use modifiers, such as, "I have a *strong* preference for introversion," or "He has a *mild* preference for extraversion."

I say this because most people experience a bit of cognitive dissonance when trying to decide where they fall on the introvert-extravert spectrum. We all have moments when we need peace and quiet, and we all have those times when we enjoy being around many people. Everyone can be introverted at some times and extraverted at others. The fact that it's a preference means that we have one underlying default that we tend to rely on more than the other.

It's Contextual

How we present ourselves to the world is highly contextual. Despite our underlying default preference, we learn, over the course of our lives, to adapt to the situations in which we find ourselves. For example, when I moved from the realm of teaching mathematics into the corporate world, I quickly discovered that I had to dial up my extraversion so that I could connect with colleagues more effectively. Similarly, I know introverted parents of extraverted children who have learned to adapt and adjust to the needs of their children. And social situations require all of us to lean into our extraversion at times. It's all contextual.

We Mature Over Time

Everyone has an underlying, default preference point on the introvert-extravert spectrum. When we are young, we operate almost exclusively from that default point. However, as we age — and hopefully mature — we often push ourselves toward the other end of the spectrum. Our natural hunger to grow as human beings leads us to step out of our comfort zones. Introverts become more comfortable with being extraverted, and vice versa.

Network Differently

How do we bring all this background about introverts and extraverts into the realm of networking? Networking is about developing relationships — a deeply personal and human endeavor. Just as there is no predefined way to build a relationship with someone, I offer no predefined ways to network.

The only rule is to be yourself. Be honest and true to where you are along the spectrum of introversion and extraversion.[21] Find ways of socially connecting and relating *that work for you*. Don't try to be what you are not. Don't push yourself to the center of a crowded room if you are more comfortable at the perimeter. Don't feel like you have to pick up the phone if writing an email is how your mind works best. And for goodness' sake, don't try to network the way someone else networks if that approach doesn't feel natural to you. Leverage your preferences. If you are an introvert, network in a way that honors your preferences as an introvert. Ditto for extraverts.

For extraverts, watch out for your propensity to just keep talking. It comes naturally to you, and talking is how you think. But talking too much can take all the oxygen out of the room. In fact, if you find yourself talking too much, the chances are good that you are talking to an introvert. Most introverts are perfectly happy to let you chatter right along. The chance of making any kind of meaningful networking connection when one person does all the talking is nil.

To be a socially skilled extraverted networker, balance your talking with a few good questions and some active listening. Remember that introverts have no inner compulsion to speak their thoughts. It is not natural for them to interrupt. Try to learn about the other person. They may be sitting on a treasure trove of interesting ideas.

For introverts, when you find yourself in networking and social situations, *don't wait to be asked!* Here's an insight gleaned from observing and talking to extraverts over the years: *the extraverts are waiting for you to interrupt.* They're waiting for you to join the conversation. I know you would prefer that your thoughts be more fully formed before speaking them, but conversations don't work that way. Conversations are messy,

haphazard, often careening this way and that. Thoughts are only partially formed for everyone. Toss an idea out there and see how it lands. You don't have to move to the center of the room, and you don't have to be the center of attention. But don't just stand there waiting to be asked.

Chapter 4

Why Network?
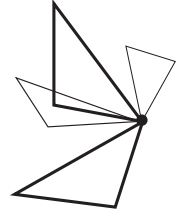
Having a large fan base is not nearly as important as having a small tribe.

Martin Jones[22]

Before we venture further into our mission to discover a new networking mindset, some may be asking, "Why bother? Do I really need to do this? Is it worth the effort to invest the time and energy it will take to build and maintain a vibrant network?" This is a fair question. Personal and professional networking is over-hyped in our modern media. Everyone and their brother has an idea — and a blog post — about how to network. Most articles offer little more than bromides and misguided advice.

To the networking skeptics, I remind you that humans are social creatures. We have an innate craving to connect with others in meaningful ways. And yet, the more populated our world becomes, the more our traditional sources of social connections are weakening. We barely know our neighbors anymore. Our relationships with our coworkers have not fared much better. It is no coincidence that the very concept of networking has emerged as our lives are becoming more mobile and we increasingly focus our attention online. My hope is that, by the end of this book — if not the end of this chapter — you will see that deliberately building and nurturing a web of personal and professional relationships is a natural extension of who you are and who you aspire to become. Your network becomes part of your identity. I believe that in our modern world, networking is essential. Not networking is not an option.

Don't Grovel

If you are currently employed, you may also be asking yourself, "I already have a job; why would I want to network?" This is one of the more pernicious myths about networking — that networking is for getting a job.

The worst example I have ever encountered of this misguided mindset came years ago when I was participating in a job-search work team.[*] There were six to eight of us who had decided to meet weekly to support and coach one another in our job searches. During our inaugural meeting we each shared why we were there and what we were hoping to get out of the group. One member said that, while he currently had a job, he was thinking of looking for something else and wanted to "turn up his network." To this day I still can't get that phrase out of my mind. I imagined that this guy thought of his network as akin to a string of Christmas lights. He believed that he could simply light up his network when he needed it and unplug it when he landed a new job. Alas, relationships don't work that way.

It is true that a healthy network is essential to a vibrant career. It is also true that sometimes we need to tap our network for help in that next career move. However, if all we do is ask our network for things, we run the risk that our networking will descend into groveling — or "net-groveling," as I like to call it. We will cover the role of networking as part of a job-search strategy in detail in Chapter 20. And the entire final section on networking inside of your organization is the playbook to networking as a long-term career strategy. Until then, let's explore some other reasons why you might want to network.

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[*] If you find yourself searching for a job, joining (or forming) a job-search work team is highly recommended. There are numerous templates for how these teams run, but the basic idea is that team members agree to hold one another accountable for sticking with the arduous task of job searching; you share insights and tips; and you offer support, encouragement, and camaraderie.

Traditional Reasons to Network

Meet Interesting People

My favorite reason to network — and the only reason I ever need — is simply to meet interesting people. We all have a story to tell. The world is full of fascinating people, each of whom have traveled a unique journey. It is amazing what you can learn — especially about yourself — by listening to someone's story.

Knowledge and Information

My second-favorite reason to network might be to learn stuff. Networking can provide a rich source of information on any imaginable subject. What do you need to know? What would you like to learn? Who knows it?

Find Talent

In today's highly specialized and complex world, finding the right person for the job takes more than posting a job description or searching for résumés online. There is a reason that smart companies offer employee referral programs: they work![23] People who network richly can tap into highly qualified talent more easily. As you move through your career, you will find it increasingly valuable to know people who work in your field or industry. Your network becomes a vast pool of potential talent.

A Word About Sales and Business Development

If you have something to sell, ancient wisdom prescribes that you must have a network. Every salesperson knows this. From real-estate agents to global account executives, the oldest reason in the book for active networking is to find new customers, clients, partners, and otherwise mutually beneficial professional relationships. This is classic sales and business development.

However, sales and business development are not networking. Sales-oriented people run the risk of descending into net-groveling if they are not careful. If your only goal is to meet people so that you can sell them something, then you are not exactly embracing the world with a spirit of helpfulness. If you prioritize finding new connections over strengthening existing ones, you may not be networking at all.

That is not to say that sales-oriented people can't also be networking-oriented people. I have met plenty of fantastic salespeople who were also master networkers. The key is to see each connection as a mutually beneficial relationship (not just a potential sale) and to always be looking to offer something of value in exchange for help with whatever you are working on.

Deeper Reasons to Network

Beyond the reasons mentioned above, there are much deeper—and less obvious—reasons to build and nurture a rich web of personal and professional connections.

Your Network Is an Asset

Your network is not just a vast talent pool but also a key asset that belongs uniquely to you. As you mature as a professional and as a leader, it will be increasingly critical to your success that you have a broad network of talent and relationships that you bring with you to each position. Over time your network becomes richer and more valuable. You build it, you maintain it, you leverage it—and no one can take it away from you.

Right Place, Right Time

Successful careers involve a tremendous amount of serendipity. It's not enough to be good at what you do; that's just table stakes. You must also be in the right place at the right time to connect with someone who is willing to pay for the value that you are ready to provide.

Careers do not come with any kind of guarantee of success. However, you can increase your odds substantially by being well networked.

The more active connections in your network, the more likely that you will be in the right place at the right time when opportunities come along.

Karma

Networking with a spirit of helpfulness brings good karma. Traditional networking is self-serving — what's in it for me? The best networkers have always known that there is a "pay-it-forward" aspect to networking. Good things come to those who seek to be helpful and assume other people are doing the same.

Visibility Into the Right Stuff

Networking helps shape your career by offering two-way visibility into what people are working on, and vice-versa. To be successful, you must get four things right:

1. Do good work — this goes without saying, doesn't it?
2. Provide value — in addition to doing good work, you must be doing work that people need. It doesn't matter if you are the best cowpoke in all the land if no one is hiring cowboys anymore.
3. Be visible to others — people must know you and know of you.
4. Have good visibility of others — you must know what other people are working on; what brings value to them, the company, and the marketplace; and what might lie around the next corner.

As we'll see in *Part IV — Networking at Work*, the relationships you build and maintain inside of your organization play an important role in all four of the above steps. It's no longer enough to do good work — if it ever was. To be successful, you must be known. You need a good reputation, a good brand. People need to know what you do, what you aspire to do, what you're working on, and what you're capable of doing. Networking plays a key role in all these things.

Further, modern organizations are complex, multidimensional, and cross-functional. To do your best work, you will need relationships and connections that reach across the organization. Sometimes you will need to draw on your connections to gather or provide information. Other times you will leverage those good relationships to exchange favors or to drive a change through the organization. Networking helps you maintain crucial visibility across the organization over time. This visibility helps you to be recognized as a contributor and may even tip you off about important projects elsewhere in the company.

When you pay attention to what other people are working on, you not only find ways to help them be successful, but you begin to see patterns, which turn into future trends, services, and businesses. You almost automatically adjust and adapt your career trajectory based on what you learn and what provides the most value to the organization (or the market). Networking helps you figure out what this, or any, company will pay you to do. Networking helps you work on the right things and adapt what you do to maximize the value that you can provide.

It Takes a (Global) Village

Perhaps the most important reason of all to network is that success has always required us to be part of a community, a tribe. Your network is your tribe. It is the people to whom you are loyal and who, you trust, will be loyal to you. How you find or build that tribe has evolved considerably over the last few centuries through three distinct identities.

Centuries ago, our tribes were geographic. As we migrated from nomadic lives on the plains and the prairies, we settled in or around small towns. The people of these towns became our tribe. We bought our kitchenware from the local five-and-dime and our shoes from the community cobbler. And, God forbid, if our barn burned down, the entire community came out to help us build a new one. Your tribe, or your "team," was the people in your geographic vicinity. Mutual survival led to mutual success.

In the twentieth century, especially post World War II through the 1990s, more and more people earned their livelihood in ever-larger organizations. We migrated from rural and small-town communities to urban and suburban settings, and we saw the rise of the modern corporation as the place where we earned our livelihoods. It was not uncommon for people to work for one company for a long time — often their entire careers — becoming deeply identified with their coworkers as their "community" or their tribe.

Now, in the twenty-first century, the world has changed again. Geography and physical proximity are no longer the primary factors in determining the organizations we work *for* and, especially, the colleagues we work *with*. Companies are multinational and teams are global. Further, the bond of loyalty between employer and employee has been precipitously weakened. The nature of the employer-employee relationship has evolved beyond the company tribe into a patchwork of contractors, consultants, freelancers, and full-time employees.

The bad news is that your tribe doesn't just come to you with your job or your neighborhood, as it did in the past. The good news is that the rise of communication technology, along with the concomitant emergence of social media, means that we can build our own tribes. Geography be damned! Our networks are no longer constrained by whom we happen to work with and whom we happen to meet in our day-to-day activities. We are free to seek out and build our own personal tribes with whomever and however we choose.

If you want a rich network of mutually beneficial professional relationships, then you must build your own tribe now. The good news is that you get to build the tribe you want. Company and geography no longer bind you. With tools like LinkedIn and Twitter, and a broad array of other social media platforms, technology is minimizing the limitations of geographic separation. We can now create and maintain relationships with people from around the globe who share our interests and passions.

And build them we must. In the modern career, not networking is not an option. Most important, your tribe needs you, the world needs you, and you need your tribe.

Up Next

Let's recap what we've done so far:

- I've made the case for you to have an open mind and an honest assessment of your networking skills.

- I've argued that networking skills are merely a subset of social skills, and both must be learned.

- I've illuminated significant differences between introverts and extraverts and urged you to develop an approach to networking that is true to your personal style and preferences.

- I've argued that there's no one way to network; there are as many approaches to networking as there are people.

- I've made several different cases for why you might want to build a network.

What I haven't done yet is talk about what networking actually is. Let's do that next.

showing me how it's done through the writing and publication of his own book, *Becoming Amish.*

And finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my spouse and partner, Linda Gottschalk, whose support and career enabled a lifestyle for us that made my coaching and writing possible. Her insights into corporate life are sprinkled throughout the pages of this book. Further, our life together has taken us on a nomadic journey that forced me out of my shell. I suspect that my networking skills would have remained dormant if not for her confidence and comfort in social situations. I'm hoping that the adventure is just beginning.

About the Author

Heather Hollick is a speaker, writer, facilitator, and coach on a mission to make the world a better place to work. She is an expert in helping people navigate complex organizations and build satisfying careers. She is also adept at helping leaders create strong teams and vibrant organizations.

Heather has an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley, a master's degree in applied mathematics from Purdue University, and an undergraduate degree in math, physics, and secondary education.

Speaking and coaching are Heather's third career. After almost a decade as a high-school and college math and physics teacher, she made the leap to the corporate world, where she developed into a seasoned IT leader, managing data centers and large projects for such diverse entities as Cisco Systems and the Pensions Department of the British Government.

Not only is Heather on her third career, but she has earned her networking stripes through total immersion. She recently moved for the twenty-ninth time since heading off to college. Born in Canada, she has lived and worked in seventeen cities and towns, eight US states, three countries, and on two continents. In each new place she hit the ground running, starting with little more than her existing network, a clear networking strategy, and a dogged determination to connect with people.

Endnotes
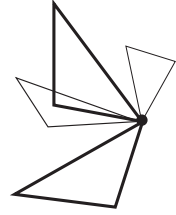
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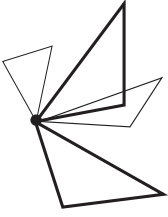
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