

Communicate and Network Your Way to More Success!

by Lillian D. Bjorseth

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Welcome to another issue of Communicate and Network Your Way to Success. My mission is to provide valuable information to help you build social capital. I also keep you up-to-date on public workshops, events and products to help you hone your skills and grow your network. Contact me for keynotes, workshops, in-house training or coaching in vital business networking and communication skills, or if you would like to reproduce any part of this newsletter in your print or electronic media.

Please enter lilianspeaks@duoforce.com or unmark as spam in your e-mail database to ensure you receive this newsletter. If you are unable to view it here, you may read it online at <http://duoforce.com/ldb/direct3-newsletter.htm>.

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Networking is a Sexually Unbiased Skill

Building beneficial relationships knows no gender boundaries. It is equally beneficial for men and women, and the process can be equally daunting or equally easy for members of either sex.

There are, however, some differences that impact the networker's bottom line. Male chauvinists and radical feminists agree on one thing: Women, probably by nature or because they are the bearers of children, are more nurturing and tend to be more cooperative, empathic and understanding in a non-biased manner. After all, they share their love unselfishly as they rear boys and girls.

Most women are natural networkers. They, their mothers and their grandmothers have been recommending recipes, hairdressers and skincare products across kitchen tables for generations. Where the challenge for some women arises is in the business arena. The increased emphasis on teaching relationship building is helping women become more confident and competent about transferring their skills to the workplace.

Some "older" women were taught by their mothers (who thought them to be positive qualities) to be seen and not heard, not to exploit their personal relationships or to "brag" about themselves. Hopefully, fathers and mothers today are teaching their daughters that it is acceptable for women to be just as assertive as men, socially and in business, and, that as their daughters enter the business world, this issue will be largely non-existent.

As a reminder, assertive behavior is what all human beings strive for: to be concerned that the other person gets his/her needs met while you do the same. Passive behavior is when you are concerned only that the other person's gets his/her needs met while you don't put any emphasis on yours. Aggressive behavior is when you are concerned only about meeting your needs and pay little attention to the needs of the other person.

What does remain a challenge is that in business likes tend to want to work with likes, i.e. women with women and men with men. Because there are only a handful of women CEOs in the Fortune 500 companies, it's easy to understand why women may not have the same opportunities to build high-value business relationships. This will change only as more women rise to top jobs at major corporations and become more than token members of corporate and organizational boards of directors.

That's exactly what the ole boys' network was and in some cases still is: men at the top helping other men rise to the same levels. Women are not yet as privy to networking in these elite places so while their skills are top-notch, their results may be less impactful and powerful.

Women, however, are gaining in numbers what they lack in force. Because of the corporate glass ceilings (and, yes, they still exist), so many of them are starting businesses and becoming owners and presidents that they are beginning to gain clout through sheer numbers. This, in turn, adds clout to the relationships they are building. While they may not be managing the same number of people, they are learning important leadership skills.

Another positive force for women is the number of company-sponsored women's networks that are being formed within major corporations. Some of them, though, are still perfunctory.

A representative of a newly formed women's group at a Chicago professional services firm contacted me to present a program on relationship building. We agreed it would provide valuable skills for the women's professional development. When we started talking fees, she said there was no budget. Ironically, she continued to say how top management (all men) was so supportive of their initiative ... yet they wanted to get a speaker - a woman - to donate her time. It was even more pathetic that management wouldn't even agree to pay my travel expenses (simply gas mileage from a Chicago suburb)!

Perhaps, I am optimistic in stating how far women have come. However, I am optimistic by nature, so I believe that by working together, men and women, we can help the process move forward positively ... and soon.



Seventh Great Chicago Networking Extravaganza Coming Soon!

Put May 8, 2008 on your calendar now because you don't want to miss one of Chicago's premier networking events!

What makes the GCNE different and better? Many events offer you "networking time" with no formal skills enhancement or guidance in how to work an event. Others offer you an opportunity to meet a lot of people in a fast-paced sequence, again with no emphasis on skill building.

The GCNE offers both! It gives you time to mix and mingle on your own as well as learn and mingle, a dynamite combination for more business and career success. Plus Jason

Jacobsohn, my co-host, and I make our living helping people enhance their relationship-building skills, build social capital and connect with others. We walk our talk!

The event is from 5:30 - 8:30 pm at the Carlisle in Lombard. Click <http://www.duoforce.com/GC2008/network.htm> to see what previous attendees say, for more details and to register. Contact me at lillianspeaks@duoforce.com to join our growing list of sponsors for this one-of-a kind event.



Ask the Business Networking Authority

Do you have questions about business networking protocol or how to network strategically? Send them to me at lillianspeaks@duoforce.com, and I'll answer as many as I can in this newsletter. Put "question for newsletter" in the subject line.

I'm one of those women who is "in transition", and I have a question that is really concerning me. In two different job interviews, a third person joined us. In both cases, they were men, and they shook my hand and made a big deal that I stay seated. I did. Was that the right thing to do?

Seated in Portland

No, it was not. Height is power, and anyone who stays seated in the situation you described gives away power ... and equality and credibility and respect and professionalism. Our society looks upon handshakes as a sign of courtesy and respect. Men and women equally want to convey both of those qualities, both personally and in business. Courtesy and respect for others suggest that you rise to greet them, no matter what the situation, i.e., a job interview or a social dinner out with friends. Your gesture of rising indicates you are eager to meet them and want to treat each other as equals. Do a quick role play to get the "feel" of what I am saying. Take turns shaking hands while one of you sits, and the other stands. The feeling you get when you "look up" to someone whom you want to have treat you as an equal says even more than my words can. In the future, rise to the occasion.



Our Readers Write

"Your November 2007 issue was a very interesting text. I enjoy your newsletters very much. Thank you for sending the information to me. I learn a lot from them. Also, your presentation at HEREIU Welfare Pension Fund was very well received and enjoyed by all who attended. It was a pleasure to meet with you."

JoAnn Howard, RN
Medical Management



In the Media

Lillian has been particularly busy in print and electronic media over the holidays. Click on www.duoforce.com/ldb/media.htm to read Lillian's latest print interviews:

- Jason Jacobson's Jan. 1, 2008 blog, [Networking Insight](#), about how Lillian got started in the networking business.
- The December 2007 issue of *Write-On!* to find out how Lillian got started publishing her products ... and her future plans.

Click on <http://www.duoforce.com/ldb/bio.htm> to listen to two recent live interviews with Lillian:

- *National Networker Show*, Dec. 18, 2007
- *Work Matters*, January 2008

In his blog, *Urban Expressionist Views and Marketing Graffiti*, Russ Kovar quotes Lillian on why so many people fail at networking. Read it at <http://urbanexpressionist.com/archives/2007/12/04/people-know-people/>.



About Lillian D. Bjorseth

Lillian Bjorseth helps you build a new kind of wealth - social capital - by improving your business networking, business development and communication skills. She's a Lisle IL-based professional speaker, trainer, coach, prolific author and certified DISC trainer. Contact her at lillianspeaks@duoforce.com, 630-983-5308 or visit www.duoforce.com



Did You Know ...

- Only two people signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4 - John Hancock and Charles Thomson (great trivia question!). Most of the rest signed on Aug. 2, but the last signature wasn't added until 5 years later.

... until next time

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