

Relationship Building Moves Like a Turtle ... Slow and Steady!

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Englishman Christopher Chapman requested the following epitaph in 1680:

What I gave, I have.
What I spent, I had.
What I left, I lost
By not giving it.

More than three hundred years later, it is still a good prescription for successful relationship building. In fact, the art of networking is based on the premise that to give is to receive.

Some people get it; some don't and are quick to blame the process. In fact, they have their modus operandi backwards. They want to "get" immediately ... or at least within a week or a month of having made a new contact. Certainly, before they expend a lot of time and effort on the other person.

They are easy to spot. They talk incessantly about themselves and seem to consider it an interruption if you ask a question ... even about them! They walk away from a conversation without knowing much more about you, and they don't even care.

They also are the people who call or e-mail you and within 10 seconds are telling you they what they are looking for: a different job, a lead into a certain company, and so on. Seldom do they ask how you are doing.

Another good example is the new members in a chamber of commerce who send letters of introduction to other members. I've gotten 30-40 over the years. They all follow the same pattern, "I'm a new member of "xyz" chamber, and here's what I do. I'd like to stop by your office and tell you more." Rarely, do they indicate even a passing interest in what I do. What a radical departure it would be to get the following:

"I'm a new member of "xyz" chamber, and I want to get to know you and your services better. May I stop by your office or take you to lunch soon?"

I'd be so impressed I'd pick up the phone and offer to take them to lunch! They would be a good example of the "other people." They are the ones who ask, "Who are your best customers/clients?" or "What need/pain shall I listen for so I know when to refer you?" And, you know they mean it because they are quiet and give you time to answer thoughtfully! Then you can reciprocate with similar inquiries.

Relationship building takes time, care and commitment, which can be too much work for those who expect instant gratification and results.

Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is a good network. Romulus didn't let naysayers deter him, and Rome still exists! Here are some good reasons why you should stick with the tried and true networking process to reap solid, future benefits:

- Warm calls (those backed by a referral from someone else or someone you have met) produce at least 80 percent more results than cold calls.

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- At least 85 percent of all jobs are found through referrals.
- Each of us knows about 300 people to whom we could refer others and to whom others can refer us.
- We are only six people away from anyone in the world we want to do business with when we proactively let people know. (This exercise works near miracles in my workshops.)
- Networking greases the skids so we can slide easily into the door.
- In the beginning, it's whom you know not what you know. Once inside, you need to be the "what" expert.

The networking process works; it's people who corrupt it.

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