



How To Make It In Business

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ADVANCED NETWORKING: the fastest track in careers 9 IMPORTANT TIPS

In his book "What the Dog Saw," Malcolm Gladwell titles one especially worthwhile chapter "The New-Boy Network." According to Gladwell, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer gave a speech to former Microsoft interns and a young man posed an astute question to Ballmer. After that talk, Ballmer asked this college senior for his e-mail address. Soon Ballmer and the questioner were engaged in a lively discussion about the young man's "career trajectory."

What triggers career-shaping interpersonal attraction is changing. A mind-bending Tweet or an imaginative Facebook Poke can snip through "Six Degrees of Separation" in a nano-second. What one used to know about networking might have landed you onto the playing field. Today it may not even click you through the stadium turnstile. Readers tell me my book "Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty" is a networking classic. While the tried and true principles described in it can still work wonders, I hasten to add: Networking is an ever-changing art. The nine most important new things I have learned about networking in the last 10 years are:

1. Don't network all prospects the same way. There is no cookie-cutter style that will gain you easy entry into every network. Tailor your pitch to each group. For Bostonians, sometimes humble Roxbury roots count far more than a fancy Beacon Hill address.
2. Create an appealing, inspiring presence for yourself in social media. Make sure that it seamlessly supports your professional and business goals. Constantly update it and pay special attention to the list of colleagues who link to you as peers. Share insights and tips. This is becoming an opportunity area for businesses, too. In a column for the brainyard, David F. Carr notes: "InboxQ . . . makes a tool that mines Twitter posts for unanswered questions that can be turned into sales leads." When you do offer help, accent what's constructive... not self-serving.

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3. Monitor the networking capabilities of subordinates. Networks are so powerful because of how well they expand reach. Your own network is never enough. Whenever you recruit team members, learn about their networks. Industry and community contacts can open untold doors, and they speak volumes about people's values. Make networking goals as tangible and measurable as you can. Challenge subordinates to link networking to their personal development.
4. Emphasize your mastery of teamwork. In today's leaner, faster-moving organizations, executives are increas-

ingly picked for their ability to inspire and integrate teamwork. GE legend Jack Welch exemplified teamwork—well—electrically!

5. Plan your networking timeline. Look at where you want your business or career to be in five years and the contacts you will need in order to prosper and excel. The higher the goal, the slower and more demanding the access ramp. Cultivating future networks is second-nature in great politicians. Ronald Reagan's road to the White House in 1980, experts say, was ignited by a speech he gave to support the losing Republican campaign in 1964.
6. Be a competitive, sharp-eyed ally. Everyone values competitive insight. Respect business and trade confidentiality, but help others piece together challenges and threats they might neglect. There is always a place in the dugout for someone who can pick off the other team's signs.
7. Showcase your developmental prowess. Top executives increasingly want to know the answer to one question in evaluating other industry leaders for any role: What top people have you developed and where are they today? Make it a point to keep success stories you helped to groom part of your network.
8. Collect mentors. Nostalgia and sentimentality may attach you to the same mentor who brought you along in your earlier years. Be respectful, but add new mentors to your list as you set your sights higher or fine-tune your direction.
9. Teach your children to network in a disciplined way. In Connecticut, I spotted an ad for "Generation.Next: Dale Carnegie Training for Teens." Networking is indispensable for summer internships and first jobs. Networking may also be one of the most overlooked family values . . . and assets.

Mackay's Moral:
 Don't overlook the net in networking.

