

Forget Networking: Become a Connector

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No matter how far you advance your career, networking is likely never going to be something you enjoy. And for the introverted among us, it can feel like we're being forced back into those endless icebreaker exercises we had to do at corporate retreats while we were coming up. So, let's stop. Wait, what?

You read that correctly. Let's stop networking. Instead, [let's start connecting](#) and helping. When you start looking at networking as a way to help people, it gets a lot easier. Remember what Jim Rohn once said: "If you help enough people get what they want, inevitably you get what you want." Here's how you do it.

Be Approachable

Networking and industry meet-and-greets are inherently uncomfortable, even for the extroverted out there. Thankfully, as someone who has already worked her way up the ladder, you are now the connection people hope to gain. This means that, while you are getting your bearings, you can let people come to you. This is far easier than trying to force yourself to start conversations before you're ready to do so.

The Buddy System

You're never too old or too high up the food chain to eschew the buddy system. In this instance, what you're going to do is pair up with someone extroverted. The extroverts among us are fantastic at taking the leap to make introductions and striking up conversations in uncomfortable environments. As someone more introverted, your strength is keeping the conversation going by asking questions and paying close attention to how the person responds. It's a symbiotic relationship and can help your extroverted "buddy" as much as it helps you.

Step it Up a Notch

By now you know that networking is about more than the initial meeting. It is about following up on that meeting. The simplest way to do this is to follow each other on social media. The casual nature of social media allows you to keep up with each other without a ton of effort. The connection can grow at its own pace. Reply to their posts. Promote their posts. Inevitably you'll

see one of your connections need something. This is when you make your move. Suggest a solution, offer to help, offer to connect that person with someone you know who can help them, etc.

Build Credibility

This works so well because you've already built up trust with your connection. You feel like you know each other already, so helping them solve a problem won't feel strange or awkward. And it increases the likelihood that your offer will be seen and, more importantly, taken seriously.

Now what you must do is follow through on your offers. The hard part is not promising more than you know you can deliver. One of the best parts of making progress in your career is having the means to lend a hand to those who are still working their way up. Mentoring and helping others advance can become almost an addiction. Therefore, you need to be objective. Apply your business know-how to your urge to help and remember: it is better to promise small and deliver big than to promise big and deliver small.

Grow, Baby, Grow

The nice thing about this approach is that it takes the awkwardness of networking and turns it into an introvert-friendly and organic connection process. Best of all, your initial success will build upon itself naturally over time. It will be the best automated process you've ever developed.

People who actually enjoy networking are the unicorns of the business world. Most of the people you meet will be just like you: forcing themselves to do something incredibly awkward that they hate because they know it will help grow their companies. Your urge to avoid it is understandable. Still, try using the method we've outlined here. It's awkwardness reduction properties will make networking much easier to endure.