

The Law of Two Favors

*A Handbook on Building, Managing, and Leveraging
Influential Relationships*

By
Jay C. Allen

Dust Cover

After building a personal network of over 5,000 executives across the US, this professional networker tells you the secrets of his success. Read about why he ultimately rejected the traditional networking circles to pursue a more efficient way of accessing influential leaders. His methods, developed and honed over 15 years, delivered a greater than 90% success rate for accessing and developing relationships with any influential leader. Learn how he did it, and how you can have similar success.

Table of Contents

Dedication	5
Introduction	6
What is the Law of Two Favors?	7
Why Influential Relationships Matter	8
The Story of Two Brothers	8
How I stumbled onto ‘The Secret’	9
The Problem with Traditional ‘Networking’	11
Executive Networking Organizations Have a Lifecycle	12
Traditional Networking is Very Inefficient	12
What should happen that doesn’t	13
The Opportunity	13
Networking and Baseball	14
Building the Team	15
Managing the Team	15
Leveraging the team to profitability	16
Only ‘Building’	16
All ‘Leverage’	16
Not Managing your Current Network	17
Building Your Network – The Pursuit of New Relationships	19
Where to go	19
Feeling Awkward	20
The Importance of being ‘Human’	21
Genuine Service	21
Genuine Interest	22
How to do it	23
The Multi-Cold Call	23
Leveraging Someone Else’s Influence	25
Getting the Gang Together	27
The Third Party Request (TPR)	29
Who are you?	31
If you are a student or intern	31

If you are unemployed.....	31
If you are a salesperson	31
What’s in it for them?	32
A Word about Fear.....	33
The CXO Creed	34
The Result of ‘Building’ Correctly.....	34
Managing your Network - The Nurturing and Management of Current Relationships.....	36
Meaningful Connections	36
Newsletters	36
Topic based small seminar	37
A personal call.....	38
Just Lunch.....	38
The Irony of Randomness	39
A Monthly Open Networking Lunch	39
LinkedIn Lunch	40
Things to Do, and to Avoid, when ‘Re-connecting’	41
Things you should do	41
Things you should avoid.....	43
Managing Data.....	44
Always be improving your data	45
Living the Golden Rule	45
Leveraging your Network – How to Create Value	46
The Law of Two Favors.....	48
The Third Party Endorsement	48
Using ‘Chits’ or ‘Tit-for-Tat’ to Leverage Relationships	50
A Friend Helping a Friend.....	51
Going from Having a Friend ... to Closing a Deal.....	51
The Friend’s Dilemma	53
Leveraging these Concepts in other Areas	56
Opportunities Multiplied	56
Finding a Mentor.....	57
A Note on Executive Communications.....	58

The Test.....	59
Collecting Contact Information.....	60
How to give a good email introduction	61
How to schedule a meeting	62
The View from the Executive’s Side of the Table	63
Conclusion.....	64

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife who put up with the crazy whims of an entrepreneur for so many years.

Introduction

The principles discussed in this book could apply to virtually any individual or company trying to build and leverage a personal network. However, this book is written primarily for individuals and companies who need to sell into the enterprise (not small business or consumer) and who need to reach into the executive realm of those organizations. These are people who need their network to be made up of 'influential leaders' – the most difficult network to build.

Effectively accessing the executive level of a substantial organization has long been the Holy Grail – and many books have been written about how best to do it. I remember reading *'Selling to VITO'* as a sales manager and trying to implement their recommended tactics. At the time, if I had a 5% success rate getting a meeting by cold calling into the large enterprise, I was a success! Now, with the methods discussed in this book, I have rarely fallen below a 90% success rate cold calling into large enterprise and often operate at 100% success.

Be advised, I am not an academic when it comes to these strategies, I am a practitioner. After 15 years of developing and successfully working these methods every day with thousands of executives, I am ready to share what I have learned and the secrets of my success. And it should be noted that the influential leaders who you are trying to meet endorse these methods.

While this is not strictly a sales related book – if you are in sales, there are other skills you will need which are not addressed in this book, such as:

- How to choose your target accounts and the individuals within those accounts
- How to qualify your prospects
- How to move a deal through the pipeline
- How to negotiate the best terms
- How to close the deal

What is addressed in this book is:

- How to get in the door of virtually any high-level executive or influencer
- How to develop and nurture a long-term relationship with an influential person which extends beyond the scope of the 'deal', or the company that you or they work for currently
- How to ask for what you need, without impacting the relationship – and get it

This book is not about 'maneuvering' past the gatekeeper, or saying just the right thing to make the executive give you a shot at the sale. We will not discuss any gimmicks or tricks that give you the upper-hand. You might say that this book is about returning to communications that are genuine and leveraging a talent that each individual possesses (a talent of value to even the most influential person). It is about using that talent in a way that helps you and the receiver grow together towards a better place personally and financially. I have used it successfully to develop deep relationships with political leaders, executives of major corporations and the wealthy. Each of them values this talent equally. This talent is more than just kindness, or service or bravery – it is a unique

combination of these applied in a specific way that delivers the desired result for you and for the influential person with whom you want a relationship.

Why the Law of Two Favors?

Why did I name the book “The Law of Two Favors”? It is one of the key principles discussed in this book that has allowed me to cold call into virtually any influential person and get access to them, begin to develop a relationship, and ultimately lead to their helping me achieve my own personal and professional goals. Although I’ve read books on the importance of ‘giving first’ when networking – or ‘focusing on the other person’ as the starting point of establishing a new relationship, these books were primarily focused on how to be a better networker when you go to a networking event. None of these books told me exactly how I was supposed to apply this with CEOs of billion dollar companies or other people of significant influence. It was only after I rejected the traditional approaches to ‘networking’ and took a brave step in a new direction that things really accelerated for me. I went from joe-nobody, average sales guy, to the cover of Colorado Company Magazine as the Master Networker in just 2 years. Now, after 15 years of refining this process, I can share with you exactly what I did and how I did it.

Here is just one example of how this works – the unique nuances of how to do it will follow later in this book...

I had an important new client who was trying to close a deal with Frontier Airlines and needed to meet with the new Chief Information Officer (CIO) there. My business partner and I reached out to the CIO and said, *‘We understand you’re new to Frontier Airlines and to Denver. We ought to get you introduced to the other CIOs in the area. Let’s sync up and figure out who you want to meet and we will set up a lunch introduction.’* We got a meeting - that week.

In the meeting, we learned that he was not only new to Frontier Airlines, but new to the industry. He expressed an interest in talking to some other CIOs from his industry. My business partner suggested that we could introduce him to the CIO of Northwest Airlines and US Airways to which he expressed significant enthusiasm (this would be our two favors)!

It bears noting here that we did not know the CIO of Northwest Airlines or the CIO of US Airways but we were in the process of building our executive relationships in Minnesota (HQ of Northwest Airlines) and Arizona (HQ of US Airways). We now had the perfect reason to call those CIOs which we did. The calls went something like this:

Me: ‘Hi, is Joe there?’

Admin: ‘I’m sorry, can I ask what this is regarding?’

Me: ‘Yes, I’m calling on behalf of the CIO of Frontier Airlines. He is new to the position and the industry and was hoping to talk to Joe to get some advice.’

Admin: ‘Hold on, let me get him for you.’

We spoke to both CIOs that day – first call – and set up times for them to talk to the CIO of Frontier Airlines (we eventually met them both in person at gatherings we organized in their markets). From the date of our first call to the CIO of Frontier Airlines, to his talking to the CIOs of Northwest Airlines and US Airways, was about two weeks.

After the introduction calls with the other airline CIOs (our ‘two favors’), we reached back out to the CIO of Frontier Airlines and said that we had an executive in town who would like to meet him (our client). He did not ask who he was, he did not ask what he wanted, he simply said, *‘Great! Let’s set it up!’*

The client met the CIO and they closed one of the largest and most important deals in the company’s history.

Why Influential Relationships Matter

Being a fiercely independent person myself, I was never one to seek for help or ask for mentoring. I wanted my wins to be a reflection of my intelligence, perseverance and creativity. If you feel you also have these personality traits, then I have news for you... While these traits are admirable, this strength of character can also (ironically) be a great weakness. There is a way to still be the master of your own path to success, while permitting those around you with influence and access to accelerate and augment your successes. Let me put it in an example of two brothers, Bob and John who move to Alaska to forge an existence in the wilderness outside of Anchorage.

The Story of Two Brothers

Both Bob and John were raised to be independent people. The only difference between the two is that John spent time learning how to build and nurture influential relationships in his personal and professional life. Let’s see how this impacts their ability to pursue their goals as they relocate to Alaska to build a new life. Both brothers want to achieve the following:

- Build a log home
- Start a small, food related business to provide some income and sustenance

John, being in construction previously, had developed a relationship with the head of product development for Black & Decker. He reached out to his friend and suggested that testing some of their new prototypes in Alaska in the construction of a log home would be the ultimate test of capability and durability. His friend agreed, and sent a full complement of new power tools to him free of charge along with a generator and two other Black & Decker employees to help and document the results.

Bob, however, through research and trial and error, builds many of his own tools to use for building his home – an admirable pursuit. However, as a result of the time to make the tools, and the lower efficiency of the tools, the time to build his home is extended by four months.

John, being a Boy Scout growing up, connected with the local scout troops in Anchorage when he arrived and told them about his home building project. One of the scout leaders suggested that the boys spend part of the summer helping him with construction in order for the boys to earn their woodwork and home repair merit badges. Another Boy Scout chose to help with construction as his Eagle Scout Project. Between the Eagle Scout project and the merit badges, there were over 40 different people helping John throughout the summer to build his home.

Bob, without many local connections in Alaska, was largely left to himself to build his home. Occasionally, a neighbor would offer help (Alaskans being friendly people), and he would accept their help when a beam needed to be lifted into place or some other project demanded more than one person. Again, while admirable, the construction was extended another six months as a result.

When it came time to select and start a business which could provide money and food, Bob decided that agriculture might suit him best. He took out a loan and bought some horses and farming equipment and started working the ground.

When John thought about what business to start, he reached out to one of his mentors in Montana who ran a large ranch there to get his opinion. In the discussion, the rancher/mentor suggested that he had always wanted to be part owner of a big game and fishing Expedition Company in Alaska where he could take his executive friends. He offered to put up the money to go into business with John, outfitting him with all the necessary equipment, if John would agree to run the operation. John agreed.

In the end, both brothers achieved their goals. So what was the difference? Bob was able to look at his home and business and know that he did it all on his own, but the risks he took were far greater. It was also ultimately more expensive and time consuming for Bob – and his pursuits had a lower probability of success, both in the short-term and long-term.

John, on the other hand, reduced his out-of-pocket expenses, had better equipment and support, and fewer risks of failure. He vastly accelerated his ‘time-to-success’ and ‘level of success’ by leveraging other relationships. And every time he leveraged a relationship, it was a win-win for him and those helping – so everyone benefitted from the exchange.

How I stumbled onto ‘The Secret’

I manage my business life based on the advice I received in a fortune cookie. I keep it taped up in my office - It says, ‘*A wise man knows everything, a shrewd one, everybody.*’ At the time I opened this fortune cookie I was in a bit of a slump. I had worked in five industries, three Fortune 500 companies, four start-ups, and handled Product Development, Marketing, Operations and Sales Management. My career had skyrocketed out of college and then plateaued as I reluctantly came to the realization that if I wanted to continue to progress, I needed to do something different.

I give a lot of credit to my manager at the last large company for whom I worked. He fired me. And right before he fired me, he said 'Jay, I thought you told me when we hired you that you had executive relationships you could leverage. It appears that you don't.' Well...he was right.

As I look back on this time in my life, I realize now that I was going through my own little mid-life crisis. What do I do with the rest of my career? I don't like where I'm at – how do I get to something better? I like the relationship part of sales but cold-calling seems like a humiliating and depressing exercise in futility.

I began working for a small Corporate Venture firm, and as a result, I needed to develop relationships at the Sr. Executive level within the largest companies in the state. This was going to test my mettle.

The next year was spent attending all the networking events that other salespeople seemed to be attending in order to access the right executive leaders. Quite frankly, while there was some good content and I met some interesting people, I did not move the needle at all when it comes to meeting the 'right' people. They either did not attend or were overly guarded when they did. I always considered myself an above-average networker, but networking was failing me when it came to accessing these influential relationships.

Determined to find a way, I decided to pull together a few executive friends for lunch to get some advice on strategy. In asking them what I was doing wrong all I got back was a chuckle. It seems that most of them just did not network much. When they did participate in networking, it was either within a vendor controlled environment, or the room was full of people who just wanted something from them (to hand them a resume or try to sell them something). It seemed that the more influential they became within the organization, the less efficient the networking opportunities. The end result was that they became more isolated and had to build higher walls around themselves to keep the 'selling hoards' at bay.

I guess that answer surprised me. I had always assumed that the more influential you became the easier for you to meet whomever you wanted and networking became more efficient. And while there is an element of truth in that statement, few executives actually make a list of people they want to meet and cold call them for a meeting. By coming up through the ranks, they had developed a fear of cold calling just like everyone else. They even had insecurities and doubts about whether or not the person they would value meeting would want to meet with them. The net result was that while they might have a good network of influential people from previous jobs, their network was not growing much – and was certainly not growing strategically with the people who could help them now and in the future. It appeared that even though other influential leaders would likely want to meet them because of their stature in the business community, they still needed help identifying 'who' they should meet and someone to do the 'ask' for them so that they did not have to face potential rejection.

In an effort to validate my theory, I suggested that we jointly identify a list of 10 people they wanted to meet and that I would reach out to them and see if they wanted to get together for lunch to meet

each other. I took the list and started calling - yes, cold-calling. I explained what the group was trying to do, and why. I told them who the other invitees would be. I also stressed the rules of this lunch - no vendors, no speakers, and no sponsors, just lunch. And if they came, they would pay for their own meal. I figured if we got five of the ten to say 'yes', it would be a home run.

I was staggered when all ten said the same thing. 'I have the same problem – this is a great idea. Now who is coming? And no vendors, right? And I'm just paying for my own lunch? Sounds good. Count me in.'

It was only then that I fully realized I had stumbled upon something that had the potential to transform my future. A way to access virtually any influential leader and provide them with something valuable they all needed and wanted, but could not or would not do on their own. A way to open the door to building a longer term relationship with virtually anyone; A mechanism that would allow me access to the 'community of influence' and the opportunities that seemed to reside only in that strata. I would come to learn later that opening that new door, while being a critical insight, would only be the first of three critical insights that would lead me to being able to create personal value from those relationships.

Within six months we had over 100 of the top executives in town committed to participating in the various lunches we organized. To my recollection, there were only about three out of the first 100 calls I made who said 'No, I'm not interested'. A 97% cold-call success rate...unbelievable. And to be fair, the three who said 'no' actually had good reasons. They were retiring and didn't need to grow their business network, or they were changing jobs and moving out of state.

When we hit about 400 executives participating, I panicked a bit. This was something I was doing in my spare time on an Excel spreadsheet. We decided to form an entity, build a website and hire some administrative support to ensure we could continue to grow. In the end, the executives chipped in just enough to pay for the overhead to organize and manage the events. We grew to almost 800 participants in Colorado, including Sr. Officers of almost every major company, political leaders, heads of Venture Capital and Private Equity, and University leaders. We expanded into some other U.S. markets and Europe. We merged with a similar group out of Arizona, and as of the writing of this book, have about 5,000 executive members in 10 major markets.

The problem of accessing the right people had been solved – but I had a long way to go before I created value for myself. I discovered that it is easy to become the most connected poor person in town. There were two other lessons I still needed to learn. Before addressing those lessons, I think it's important to more fully address the reasons why this method of accessing influential leaders works so well.

The Problem with Traditional 'Networking'

You could say that even though I am now considered a 'professional networker', I dislike networking. More accurately, I dislike 'traditional networking'. So I really can't blame others, especially important executives, for disliking it also. This, in turn, results in them making it harder

for you to find an event where you can meet them. The executives you really want to meet will rarely attend a traditional networking event unless they are the speaker or the sponsor. What follows is a deeper explanation of the challenges of traditional networking.

Executive Networking Organizations Have a Lifecycle

It has been my experience that many executive organizations have a lifecycle. They start off with a great mission, fantastic events, a board made up of all the right business leaders, and you are able to meet these business leaders when you attend. However, because they rely heavily on membership dues for financial stability, they may set the bar for membership fairly low so that anyone fogging a mirror can join. The good news is that they accomplish their objective; high membership. The bad news is that most of the people joining are probably salespeople who have a quota to fill or the unemployed hoping to secure a job interview. This has the expected negative impact on the executive's motivation to attend. If you attend an event within the same organization several years later it may be a room full of salespeople and the unemployed staring at each other and wondering where the executives went. This causes membership to drop and the logical result is for the organization to change their name, re-constitute their board, redefine their mission, and start over.

This organizational cycle causes the executives to be leery of networking events because they expect to be 'fed on' rather than get value. They will likely still participate if asked to speak, or are allowed to be part of a 'pre-event, VIP reception' but their walls will be up and their armor on.

Traditional Networking is Very Inefficient

Traditional networking is very inefficient. You walk into a room with 200 people and you have no idea who they are or how they relate to your interests. You are typically given a short amount of time before and after the 'main event' to try to meet people. This forces you to play a game where you stealthily look over people's shoulders at nametags (assuming you have the benefit of nametags) and make split second decisions about whether or not you want to talk to the person while everyone else is doing the same thing to you. If you are lucky, the ratio of people you want to talk to vs. people you don't is above 50%. But that still means that you are likely to get caught by people you may not want to talk to and will need to find a way to gracefully 'extricate' yourself from the conversation. This will lower your overall percentage of available time to find and talk to people who you really want to meet.

That's not to say that you can't get value from going to an event like this, but the efficiency rate can be low – and let's face it, you, and everyone else, are most likely to spend the majority of your time looking for and talking to the people in the room you already know (the path of least awkwardness) which makes it even harder for those who are trying to forge new relationships.

Even if the stars align and you do locate that one influential leader in the room you really wanted to talk to, odds are good they will be in a conversation with someone they know. Then what? You can casually interrupt them by saying, "Hey – neither of you know me, but let me tell

you why you should.” Or you can wait quietly in the shadows for the conversation to end while hoping the main event doesn’t start soon. Wow; now you are really starting to sound desperate! They will probably sense that desperation on you and their walls will go up and *they* will be the one trying to “extricate” themselves gracefully from the conversation.

What should happen that doesn’t

The Holy Grail of networking for a prominent executive contains the following elements:

1. The attendees are all people the executive actually desires to meet. They know this because,
 - a. they were either asked who they wanted to meet and those were the only ones invited, or they were all screened to the executive’s standards
 - b. they received a list of attendees in advance and were able to confirm that people they want to meet will be in attendance
2. They are greeted by an ‘introduction facilitator’ at the event who asks them who on the attendee list they would like to meet. Upon stating their introduction interests, the introduction facilitator promptly goes off to find the individuals in the room so that the executive doesn’t have to wander aimlessly.
3. If the desired introduction is already talking to someone, the Introduction Facilitator takes the initiative to briefly interrupt the conversation and introduce the executive.

With this format, even if the executive only has 30 minutes to attend the event, they would be able to meet the five key people in the room of greatest interest.

Have you ever attended an event like that? Probably not. For one simple reason, organizations tend to be focused on ‘content’ as the primary objective and networking as a secondary objective. They assume that if the topic is good and they get a room full of people then networking will magically happen. Unfortunately, that can be a flawed assumption. Even if you get all the ‘right people’ in a room, if you don’t provide them a list of attendees and facilitate introductions, they will naturally regress to speaking to those in the room who they already know. If you asked the executive later if it was a good event, they may still say that it was – because they have come to expect a low level of networking efficiency as the standard – having never experienced anything better. And there is some value in reconnecting with people you already know at an event. So, the event organizer has little meaningful feedback that would cause them to change the current format of the events.

The Opportunity

The problem with traditional networking is that it is rarely strategically focused. The connections you end up making are more random than is useful. This creates a deterrent for influential people to engage. They need to be highly efficient with their networking time, and traditional networking is by definition, inefficient.

One executive friend of mine described it best, he said, “I have two problems. The first is that if I were to make a list of the 50 people I really needed to know in town, and then went to the networking events that were available to me, I’d likely never run into those 50 people. The second problem is that I don’t even know who should be on that list of 50 people.”

This dilemma creates a clear opportunity for those reading this book. It creates a void where these influential leaders need a Personal Networking Assistant. They need someone who will take the time to help them identify who they should meet and take them right to those people. They need someone who will remove all the uncertainty and awkwardness from the introduction; ensuring that both parties want to meet each other in advance. They are open to ANYONE willing to provide that function – the measure of value to them has nothing to do with who is helping, only that the connections made are useful.

The processes shared with you in this book can be performed successfully by anyone regardless of title, company affiliation, employed or unemployed, male or female – anyone.

Networking and Baseball

One of the most significant discoveries I made during the 12 years of building the CXO network is that ‘networking’ should not be thought of as a single activity. To be an effective and efficient networker, you needed to address and build processes and competencies around three very different activities:

1. Building your network
2. Managing your network
3. Leveraging your network

Each of these functions requires its own focus, process and expertise. Let me explain it through the prism of forming a successful baseball franchise that needs to *build* a team, *manage* the team and *leverage* the team into profitability...



Building the Team

While many who try to build their network rely on random networking collisions which happen at networking events, a viable baseball club would never use that methodology to build a team. They would go through a thoughtful process of:

1. Identifying the positions to be filled
2. Identifying possible candidates to fill those positions
3. A thoughtful process of reaching out to those candidates to recruit them to the Club

I subscribe to the same philosophy when building one's personal network. You need to ask yourself:

1. What am I trying to accomplish personally and professionally?
2. Who do I need to know that can have the greatest impact on my personal or business success?
3. How should I reach out to them and what should I say?

In later chapters we will specifically address how to 'build' the right network and some processes and strategies that work best in accessing the people on your target list. You will also realize quickly that going to traditional networking venues will not be an efficient way of realizing your goals in a timely fashion.

Managing the Team

A good ball club needs to get their players on the field to practice together. They need to become familiar with each other's strengths and weaknesses. They need to build synergy amongst themselves so that when they are in a game, and something happens, they know who is doing what to create the best outcomes.

If the players don't know each other, don't have any insight as to who plays what position and how they should interact with each other – when it comes game time, it will be chaotic and ineffective. Few positive outcomes will result.

Likewise, when you build effective processes to manage your personal network by helping promote interactions and introductions, you discover hidden talents, opportunity and resources. You also learn their strengths and weaknesses; and their needs and desires. Rather than having some static information in your contacts about a person's title and contact info, you have rich details on their personality, history, ambitions and you are helping them connect with others in your network that can help them pursue their own dreams and desires.

The person who masters managing their network, multiplies their own opportunity from that network – not because the number of contacts increased, but because their ability to identify and access opportunities from among their contacts has increased.

Effectively managing your existing network can often be more valuable than building new relationships, because the hard work of accessing these people has already been done. You are much closer to being able to leverage your network to value.

Leveraging the team to profitability

A ball club can only get to this point if they have been effective at building the right team and managing the team well. Only then can they put a team in the field of play and win games. And the best teams have the potential to produce the highest profits.

The concept of *physical leverage* is that you can apply much less force to get greater movement.

The concept of *financial leverage* is that you can use less capital to get greater returns.

The concept of '*Networking Leverage*' is that you will need fewer people in your network to accomplish the same personal or professional goals. This is possible because you have more of the 'right' people in your network; you have a stronger personal relationship with them; and you know more about how they can help you with your goals.

Building a ball club, like effective networking, is strategic. I take control over **building** (who I meet), **managing** (how I develop the relationship) and **leveraging** (when and how I create value).

If there is a lack of focus in any of the three functions, you will struggle to consistently create value from your network. Let me provide some examples:

Only 'Building'

In the beginning of this book I explained how I had discovered how to access virtually any influential person I wanted to meet. However, what I had unwittingly done in the discovery of this powerful new way of accessing influential relationships was just focus on the 'Build' part of the process. Within a couple of years I was on the cover of Colorado Company Magazine as the 'Master Networker'. At the same time, I had used up all my savings, the equity in my home, and was flat broke. I had no strategy for leveraging relationships into value for myself and was quickly becoming the most networked poor person in town.

Knowing all the right people does not translate into financial success. You actually need to have a plan around leveraging your relationships if you are going to be successful. But at the same time, if you don't have any relationships, you won't be able to implement your leverage strategy.

All 'Leverage'

You all know someone who is all 'ask' and no nurture. They are probably not your friends; they are people you have run into at networking events or church. These people know exactly what

they need from you and they get to the point. I once got an email from someone I only vaguely remember meeting. He gave me an update on his job search and attached his resume. He also included a spreadsheet of companies he wanted to work for and asked that I provide the contacts I had in each of those companies along with their contact information. The only thing I did with that email was to pass it around the office as an example of what you should NOT do in a job search. I'm curious how many people he sent that email to and what happened. Even if we had been good friends, it was a poor example of how to ask for help.

One of my business partners spent some time early in his career selling security systems door-to-door. He recalls going out with a supervisor one day and knocking on the door of an elderly woman. After talking, it was clear that she was not a good fit to buy their service, so my business partner commented warmly on her flowers and what a good gardener she was (a 'nurture' policy he used at every home regardless of the purchase outcome). Before she could answer, his supervisor offered a brusque retort that offended the woman and she promptly shut the door. The supervisor then said something my business partner always remembered: 'We are not here to make friends, we are here to sell!' Even though they sold their service to the next house, that neighborhood never did well because of the bad feelings that the supervisor had left behind with those who did not buy. His supervisor was a 'Leverage only' personality.

Again, if my business partner had only been a 'nurturer' and never asked for the business, he would have been a very kind and well liked failure. However, a 'leverage only' personality will burn every bridge behind them and provide no retreat if the selling of that one product that one day doesn't work out. They can win the battle and still lose the war. On the other hand, an effective networker who uses the 'build, manage and leverage' model may lose a few battles but will win the war.

Not Managing your Current Network

Even a college student just finishing college and starting their job search comes to the table with a list of current contacts such as church friends, schoolmates, previous employers, family friends, etc. Someone who has worked for a number of years, perhaps at several companies, might have hundreds of contacts they have made even if they never actively participated in formal networking. Each of the people in your network has a network of people they know as well so that you are just one degree of separation from hundreds, maybe thousands of people.

Instead of tapping into this network of relationships sitting right in their hip pocket, most people's first thought is to go out and meet complete strangers when they need help. Why is this? Perhaps it is too awkward to ask for help from someone you know. Maybe you don't want to tarnish their image of you as an independent and successful person? Perhaps you don't think they can help?

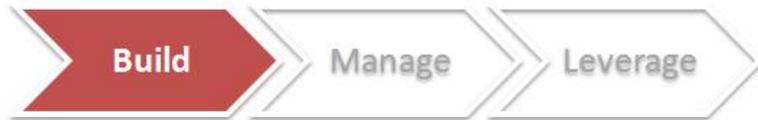
Here is what is really happening: you have not nurtured these relationships and your first contact with them in a long period would be an 'ask'. You have not kept track of them, and kept them abreast of your own personal progress. You have not made sure that you have their

current contact information and they have yours. You have not told them who you know, and learned about who they know. You have not gone out of your way to help them meet people that are valuable to them. If you had, this would be the first place you would start.

I learned a valuable lesson when I went to speak to a group of college students about how to build influential relationships. After the meeting I had a number of them come up to me and tell me that they already had some influential relationships. In many cases it was family friends, or their parent's business colleagues. I was actually surprised! My narrow mind did not anticipate that college students had any relationships that I would value. It turns out that I made many new influential contacts following that event through these students.

If you don't think that your current network can help you meet the people you need to meet, it might be because you have never asked them. And if it is too awkward for you to ask them, it is probably because you have no strategy for managing your current network of contacts.

Successful networking will require that you develop a working strategy around building, managing and leveraging influential relationships. The chapters that follow will help articulate in more detail the 'why' and the 'how'.



Building Your Network – The Pursuit of New Relationships

Where to go

During the writing of this book, I had an old contact reach out to me. He had decided to start a new career as an Insurance Agent. His main question to me was, ‘Where should I go to network? Which organizations are good?’ My answer was, ‘Who is most likely to buy your product?’ We went on to talk about the profile of company that would most likely be in a position to make a decision about insurance. I told him that he could go down the path that all the other salespeople in town are going, and attend the ‘usual events’ (I’m sure you know the organizations where you live); however, if his primary goal is networking into a sale, he would probably be really disappointed. He might have fun and learn something from a speaker, but as far as sales efficiency in finding and closing sales, it would probably be a bust – or at minimum, highly inefficient.

I suggested to him that he should fill a room with people that fit his customer profile rather than go to a room full of people he has no information about and wandering around hoping he will bump into someone valuable. While that sounded good, it did not sound easy – so I gave him an example of what I meant.

In 2010 a member of my church approached me and informed me he was thinking of becoming a commodity trader. He had some basic knowledge but was hoping I could introduce him to a successful commodity trader in town who might be able to mentor him. I didn’t know any at the time, so I suggested something different. I told him, ‘Do some research and identify the top commodity traders in the region. Then reach out to them and tell them that you are pulling together a lunch to introduce them to each other. I suspect they don’t know each other and would probably want to meet each other.’ About three months later he grabbed me in the hall at church and told me that he had identified the top traders, called them about a lunch to introduce them to each other, and they had all said yes. He had just had lunch with them all and been able to get to know them personally. They had been open to being a resource to help him, and they wanted to meet quarterly moving forward (something that he has coordinated for them since).

Back to the Insurance Agent... If he spent time identifying who he needs to meet, then acts as the conduit to introduce them to each other, he will meet them sooner, do them a favor, and be in a much better position to capture opportunity. This is a process I have used hundreds of times over the years with very, very high efficiency. The irony of the process is that the more influential the person the better it works. I’ll talk about the reasons for that later.

You should note that I did not recommend that he do a seminar on new insurance products and their benefits to get the executives together, but rather, get them together to introduce them to each other. There is a big difference between the two – let me see if I can articulate it for you this way...

An Informational Seminar	Just Breakfast/Lunch to Meet each other
They get several solicitations per week by vendors to attend these. It shouts 'Let me tell you how smart we are so that you hire us!'	They know they should get out more and develop relationships – and these are people they actually want to meet. A 'no speaker' event is refreshing.
If they come, they will come for content – with their walls up to prevent being caught in a sales pitch.	If they come, they will want to hang out and get to know everyone and talk war stories and about how to help each other. Walls will be down.
After the event, even though you probably paid for their meal, they will feel very little need for reciprocity. In other words, their showing up and hearing the sales pitch was their contribution – they don't feel they owe you anything more.	I make it clear to everyone who attends that they have to pay for their own meal. We keep things light and informal – no pitch – just friendships developing. Even though I did not pay for their meal, they walked away with value and feel some sense of obligation towards me (perhaps even <i>because</i> I did not pay for their meal).

Feeling Awkward

One of the things I disliked about being a 'salesperson' of a product is that my communications with my sales targets always went something like this:

"Hi, I'm Jay with (ABC Technology) – we sell datacenter services. Do you need datacenter services?"

"No, we don't."

"Okay ... will you let me know if you need datacenter services in the future?"

"Probably not."

I agree, that may be an oversimplification of what happens, but the basic element stands out; I am just a vendor of a product to the person I am talking to. I am not a 'real person' to them. It is easy to say 'no' because they have no personal stake in a relationship – there is no relationship with me. I'm just an interruption. In fact, I'm lucky if I can have the conversation above because most of the time their gatekeeper won't let me get that far.

This awkwardness is the essence of cold-calling; I don't know you, and you don't know me. Is there a reason to talk or meet? Probably not, most of the time. The reason we do this is that two percent of the time we may get lucky and may stumble onto someone who is actually looking for my product and wants to talk to me. So we play the numbers game:

# Calls	100
# Live Contacts	40
Got past Gatekeeper – spoke to Decision Maker	10
Got a meeting	3
Got a second mtg	2
Closed a sale	1

So how do you go from getting 3 out of 100 - to better than 90 out of 100 to take your call and say “yes” to a meeting? **Don't rely on the merits of your company or product to get the meeting** – in fact, stop seeing yourself as a salesperson of a product during that first call. You are just an Introduction Facilitator. Your role in that first engagement is to help your target executive meet someone they want to meet. You are just handling the logistics of that introduction. Your title, experience, company, product, etc., are irrelevant to getting the ‘yes’. The only important variables are:

- Do they really want to meet the influential person/people you selected?
- Can they make space on their calendar to make it happen?

An added benefit is that the gatekeeper to the executive will almost never stop you. You will get right through to the person you want to talk to, or the gatekeeper will make all the arrangements for you to meet them. You are providing them a service that they want and are not getting from anyone else. You have become their personal networking facilitator. You took all the work out of it and they just have to show up!

The Importance of being ‘Human’

This may be one of the more important aspects of the “Law of Two Favors” process – and while you can develop these approaches over time, in some ways it is either going to be part of your nature, or it is not.

Genuine Service

If you cannot truly care about people and serve them from the heart, the process of building influential relationships may be beyond your reach. I don't say that to be flippant, but rather to make the point that building trust – the kind of trust that will offer opportunities

for them to serve you (see the section on Leveraging Relationships) – cannot be developed without genuine service. Later in this book I talk about ‘using chits or Tit-for-Tat’. I make the point that that mentality is very limiting and never develops the type of relationship that can endure time. You may get what you want in the short term, but each time you ‘use a chit’ you weaken the relationship - that is the very essence of ‘you owe me’ thinking which is at the core of ‘tit-for-tat’ relationship management.

You cannot focus on the correlation of service to value while you are doing the service. The focus need to be on building a relationship that will endure whatever jobs they may or may not have in the future, and any jobs you may or may not have in the future. Your acts of service will be primarily centered on helping them ‘foster useful and desired relationships’. This may mean that you introduce them to a powerful peer while they are an executive of a big company. It may mean introducing them to a CEO of a company they would like to work for while they are unemployed. It may mean that you introduce them to a potential investor while they are looking to start a company. It may mean introducing their spouse to someone who can help with a family problem.

The goal is to position yourself as the person who can help them access other influential people who they should know (whether they have a clearly defined need or not). Even billionaires, Governors and CEOs of major companies need to continue to establish influential relationships throughout their lifetime. Nobody already knows everyone they need to know, which means that there is always opportunity to serve. It may take some work on your part to figure out ‘who they need to meet and why’. You may get it wrong sometimes. It may not be well received sometimes (less than 3% in my experience). In the end, if you identify valued relationships for them, and give your time and energy to facilitate the establishment of those relationships, and are genuine in giving that effort for them – it will be well received.

Genuine Interest

One problem you run into at networking events is that the attendees are so focused on what they need to ‘get’ that they spend their time qualifying people as prospects. They will ask you what you do, and if the answer is not relevant to them, they get nervous and start thinking of ways to end the conversation. They only have a set amount of time at this event to network – and they need to make it productive! This is just one more reason for not making the usual networking events your primary relationship building strategy.

In order to really execute the strategies described in this book, you need to live a life where **people** matter (rather than what people do and if that is helpful for you at this moment). If you are going to start a conversation with someone new, you need to be committed to connecting with them on a ‘human level’. That means learning about their family, kids, occupation (now and in the past), passions, hobbies, recreational activities, etc. You also need to connect them with other people you know that have similar values and interests.

I occasionally run across executives who ride motorcycles. I got in the habit of connecting them to each other. I discovered much later that they had all ended up forming an executive motorcycle group that rode together on the weekends.

Because I tell people about my passion for reptiles and my efforts to breed exotic pythons, I often get emails and calls from others I know who have run across people who share my passion. Through those relationships I have made friends with other executives who have tortoise habitats and or breed reptiles.

Life becomes fuller and life experiences more rich when you surround yourself with people who live this principle – to connect with people at a ‘human level’. Evaluate how your interactions with people at networking events or other situations compare with where you need to be. The first step to changing your behavior is just recognizing that you can do better. Ask more questions about them; be more interested in them; and look for ways to serve them. This is core to something I will explain in more detail later in this book, that you should never have to ask the question, ‘So, what can I do for you?’ That question just implies that you did not ask enough questions or the right questions to be able to figure out the answer for yourself.

Influential people are, at the end of the day, just people. They have interests, challenges, emotion, needs, family issues, health issues, and a desire to connect on a personal level with others. Get interested in people. Connect at a human level. Anything less is a selfish effort which will be recognized as such.

How to do it

While this process may sound easy, and it may be for some, the reality is that there is nuance to making it work well. There are definitely things that you can do to increase your success rate. During the past several years, we have hired college interns to help us and taught them these methods. It was not uncommon for them to start with around a 30% success rate. While this was astounding to them (since they were used to below 5%) it was below our expectations of 90+% success. It took work and coaching to get them up to the 90% range.

What follows are some very specific techniques that we endorse based on experience.

The Multi-Cold Call

This involves selecting two or more people that you want to meet and who should get to know each other, then calling them to coordinate a time and place to introduce them to each other. The example of the commodity traders in the previous chapter fits this example. Here are some other examples...

Human Resources Executives

For a project I was working on, I needed relationships with the Senior HR leaders of the major employers in the region. I figured that they probably all go to the SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management) events and knew each other already, but I figured I

would find out. I made a list of the top 50 largest employers in the area and started calling them – here is what I said:

‘Some of the Sr. HR executives of the largest companies in town are thinking about meeting up for lunch a few times a year – they would probably take turns hosting, without any sponsors or speakers in attendance. They were curious if you would like to be included if and when they try to pull something together.’

I was surprised to discover that almost all of them were very interested in ‘being included’. While there were a handful (1 or 2) who said they would not have time to participate, it was easy for me to say, ‘I’ll let them know...’, and not feel like they were rejecting me but rather rejecting the offered relationship with their peers.

We ended up pulling together the largest group of top HR executives in the state and it has been meeting regularly for years now. As a result, I have been able to get to know each of them personally and have forged long-term relationships which have provided many, many personal opportunities.

CFOs

There were a number of projects I was working on where being able to access the CFO’s of the major companies in a certain state would be helpful in getting deals closed. I reached out to the Sr. Partner at one of the largest law firms in the state and suggested that we pull together a breakfast to introduce the CFOs to each other. It helps to have a partner who shares your interests and objectives sometimes when making these things happen. The law firm provided their new conference facility for the breakfast and also got on the phone and made some invitations. I called through my target list saying the following:

‘Some of the CFOs of the big companies in town are planning to meet informally over breakfast a few times a year just to get to know each other better. They would like to know if they should try to include you when they do this. They are meeting next on (date/time/place)’

At that first breakfast I was able to meet several CFOs I have wanted to meet for a long time. We discovered that we had mutual friends. They offered to host future gatherings at their offices. We have continued the relationships and grown the number of CFOs attending since then.

One caution to using this method: If you choose people from a related industry and there is a healthy Industry Association in town, there is a higher probability that they already know each other and this method won’t work. I like to choose people from different industries, but similar sized companies or industries that do not have the support of a strong Association in the area. The example of the commodity traders given earlier worked because there was no Association that served them in the city.

Also keep in mind that you do not necessarily need to target the very top executives for this to work. Choose the people you most need to meet, for example:

- a. The Brand Marketing Managers of the major companies
- b. The Supply Chain Managers of the major companies
- c. The Directors of Operations of the major companies
- d. The Facility Managers of the major companies

Odds are good that if you reach out to any sub-section of similar titles within the major companies within a specific geography, you will have success.

A variation on the Multi-Cold Call is 'Leveraging Someone Else's Influence'

Leveraging Someone Else's Influence

The best use of this strategy is when you reach out to help the new executive in a company quickly develop relationships in town. Whether they are new to the area or just new to the company or the title, it is an opportunity to help them get to know the people they need to know while leveraging their influence to meet the people *you* want to meet.

The Regional President of CIGNA

When the new Regional President of CIGNA moved to our state (one of the largest employers in the city) I reached out to him and said:

'Some of the other CEOs of the big companies in the area would love to grab lunch with you to get to know you. I thought we might look at some dates and see what works for everyone.'

The gatekeeper, of course, let me right through to him and he, of course, said that he would love that and would like to get it on the calendar. I worked with his administrative assistant to find a date and location that worked best for him.

My next step was to pick a handful of CEOs of big companies in the area that I had not been able to meet yet and reach out to them. I said:

'A few of the other CEOs are planning to meet up with the new President of CIGNA for lunch on (date/time/location) to welcome him to the area and we were wondering if you had time to join them.'

As expected, everyone who was in town that day carved out the time to be there and I was able to meet, not only the new President of CIGNA, but a number of other CEOs that I had been wanting to meet. I should note here that I also reached out to invite some CEO's I already knew, but where I needed to continue to nurture the relationship. This was an opportunity to do a favor for them as well.

The CIO of Frontier Airlines

This story was related in the introduction, but bears repeating at this stage of the book...

I had a client who was trying to close a deal with Frontier Airlines and needed to meet with the new CIO there. My business partner and I reached out to the CIO and said, *'We understand you are new to Frontier and to Denver. We ought to get you introduced to the other CIOs in the area. Let's sync up and figure out who you want to meet and we will set up a lunch introduction.'* We got a meeting - that week.

In the meeting, we learned that he was not only new to Frontier Airlines, but new to the industry. He expressed an interest in talking to some other CIOs from his industry. My business partner suggested that we could introduce him to the CIO of Northwest Airlines and US Airways to which he expressed significant enthusiasm!

It bears noting here that we did not know the CIO of Northwest Airlines or the CIO of US Airways but we were in the process of building our executive relationships in Minnesota (HQ of Northwest Airlines) and Arizona (HQ of US Airways). We now had the perfect reason to call those CIOs which we did. The calls went something like this:

Me: 'Hi, is Joe there?'

Admin: 'I'm sorry, can I ask what this is regarding?'

Me: 'Yes, I'm calling on behalf of the CIO of Frontier Airlines. He is new to the position and the industry and was hoping to talk to Joe to get some advice.'

Admin: 'Hold on, let me get him for you.'

We spoke to both CIOs that day – first call – and set up times for them to talk to the CIO of Frontier Airlines (we eventually met them both in person at gatherings we organized in their markets). From the date of our first call to the CIO of Frontier Airlines, to his talking to the CIOs of Northwest Airlines and US Airways, was about two weeks.

After the introduction calls with the other airline CIOs, we reached back out to the CIO of Frontier Airlines and said that we had an executive in town who would like to meet him (our client). He did not ask who he was, he did not ask what he wanted, he simply said, *'Great! Let's set it up!'*

The client met the CIO and they closed one of the largest and most important deals in the company's history.

The Billionaire Intro

I had always wanted to meet a billionaire, so I used this method to meet two billionaires. In doing some economic development work in Wyoming, we became aware of a billionaire in the state who owned a number of different businesses and development properties. He had made his fortune by discovering one of the largest natural gas reserves in the United States. Because of his background, he had both a personal and financial interest in the energy industry within the region.

There was another billionaire in Omaha, NE who had an ownership in one of the other major energy companies in the region. We decided to take a gamble that they had never met. We contacted the billionaire in Wyoming and asked if he would be interested in meeting the billionaire in Omaha, NE and he was very interested. We then called the billionaire in Omaha and told him we were calling on behalf of the billionaire in Wyoming to set up a time to come to Omaha and meet him; he took the meeting. We were able to fly on the Wyoming billionaire's private jet to Omaha and introduce them to each other.

Even Billionaires need help meeting the right people.

Getting the Gang Together

This is similar to the Multi-Cold Call but with an important difference. You are making an assumption that a number of the executives of a certain category would like to get together informally and you are calling to include one of them with 'the gang'. If you pick the group well, your assumption will be spot on and they will be thanking you afterwards for pulling them together.

The concept starts with selection of a group. They should have something in common:

- CFOs of Billion dollar companies
- CEOs of the significant companies in a certain business park
- Directors of Marketing in the largest companies

Then you pick a location, date and time for them to meet. If needed, make a reservation, or reserve a private room for them. (NOTE: when reserving a private room, choose a restaurant that will not charge a fee or a minimum for the room so you don't get stuck with a bill if the attendance is low).

Now start calling and inviting them. Set the expectation of informality – something like this:

(The Admin to the CFO answers) "This is Mary, how can I help you?"

(You) "Hi Mary, this is Jay Allen, is Joe around today?"

(Admin) "He is in meetings right now, is there something I can help you with?"

(You) "Yes, you might be able to help me. A few of the CFOs of the other Billion dollar companies in the neighborhood are grabbing drinks after work on the 13th and were wondering if Joe was around that day and could break away to join them."

(Admin) "It looks like he is in town that day. Is there anything you can send me so I run it by him?"

(You) "Sure. What is your email Mary?"

Your email should read something like this (remember – this is ‘the gang getting together’ – so don’t be too formal):

Mary,

Just a follow up from our conversation a few minutes ago...

Some of the CFOs of the major companies in town like to meet up informally without the vendors in the room once in a while. They are planning to meet for drinks after work on the 13th at 5:30pm at (location). They were just curious if Joe was around and available that day to meet up with them – or if he would like to be included in the future when they get together.

If the date works for him, let me know so that I can give the other guys a heads-up that he is coming. I can also get Joe a list of who is coming in advance so he knows who to look for when he gets there.

Thanks

Frank -

Once you get a firm commitment from one, you can start to name names for the others you call. Be sure to follow up with an attendee list and make a note of who can’t come but wants to be included in the future.

NOTE I RECEIVED FROM A PERSON WHO TRIED THIS TECHNIQUE:

Jay,

Just wanted to let you know – I hosted my first VP HR networking luncheon yesterday. It went really well! We had 7 VPs and a great room at the Boulder Cork – they really set it up quite elegantly.

This is fantastic marketing (cost me \$13 and a great tip for the host staff) and beats the cold calls for sure. It was very kind of you to share this with me. I am doing this once a month now. Thanks again!

Best, Jean

You will likely be asked when you show up, ‘Who are you?’ You will need to be prepared to respond to this question. Some suggestions are provided later in this book on how to respond in a way that will not brand you as a shark in the room.

The Third Party Request (TPR)

Sometimes cold calling into an important prospective client is going to be ineffective and potentially dangerous. If you call that key executive while they are busy and start to give your pitch and they say 'not interested' and hang up. You might have lost your one shot at that account. Second attempts, if they remember the first call, will be considered unwelcome.

If you really need that meeting and are hoping to jump straight to 'Leverage' without building or managing the relationship first, then the TPR often works best.

The challenge here is that you need the prospect to:

1. Take the call
2. Not put their 'this is a sales call' walls up
3. Listen to learn
4. Feel interested enough to get engaged and get others in the organization involved

The TPR works on the premise that the executive is more inclined to talk to a third party who has vetted the company you work for, has some doubts or questions, and is asking the executive for his opinion or expertise on the matter. Let me give you an example.

I ran across a very small company that had a powerful online assessment and learning tool (and held some key patents in the area). They wanted to talk to the President of BARBRI, the largest provider of test prep products and services for the Bar Exam in the U.S., about a possible deal. Attempts were made to call into the President, but they never even got close. I was asked to make the call (a TPR).

The opportunity in these situations is that the executives have been conditioned to smell a sales pitch and to evade them, but enjoy hearing about interesting companies that are doing things which are important to them. **These two things are in direct conflict to each other.** They either have to listen to every, potentially interesting, 'never heard of them before' company that calls their office, or they have to reject them all. The only reasonable option is to build the walls high enough to keep everyone out.

The TPR is designed to provide the executive with another option; have a third party sift through the morass of companies out there to find the gems, and only reach out to them if there is something interesting and relevant to look at.

With that being said, I typically only recommend this approach for companies that don't have a recognized brand with the executive they are trying to reach but they have something unique, interesting, and relevant to the executive.

Back to the example...

I called the office of the President of BARBRI and the conversation went something like this:

Me: *“Hi, this is Jay with (your company). Is Jane around today?” [This is where your own personal company for making introductions comes in handy – see the section “Who are you?” for advice on this].*

Admin: *“I’m sorry – what is this regarding?”*

Me: *“I’m part of a group of executives in (city) that has been focused on identifying and growing the promising emerging technology companies in the region. We’ve run across a very promising technology we think could have significant potential for the test prep industry. It was suggested that we run what they are doing by Jane to get her expertise and advice.”*

Admin: *“Hold on one second – let me see if she is available.”*

Jane: *“This is Jane – how can I help you?”*

Me: *“Hi Jane, this is Jay with [your company]. We have been working with some of the executives of the major companies in (city) identifying emerging growth companies in the region that may have some potential. We’ve run across an intriguing company located in (city) that we think has the potential to be very disruptive in the education arena – specifically around test prep. They have demonstrated the ability to shorten the time-to-mastery of a subject by ¼ of what is typical, and do it in a way that puts the knowledge into long-term memory so that the recall rate is close to 80% after 12 months.*

Unfortunately, nobody on our team has the expertise in the industry to determine how best to leverage the technology. In consulting with the CEO of the company, we suggested that BARBRI might be uniquely suited to make that determination. I don’t know if you even take time to look at these sorts of things, but I thought I would reach out to see if you or someone on your team could take a look at what they are doing and give them and us some feedback on the technology.”

You should make every effort to avoid getting into a detailed explanation of what the company does or any specific value proposition. The key things you are trying to communicate are:

- Important people have looked at this already and like it
- It is something unique and interesting
- Your expertise could play an important role in determining the company’s/technology’s deployment for your industry

The President of BARBRI was personally interested in seeing a demo, which turned into a meeting with other members of their leadership, which turned into a huge sale for the company (the volume of work on that one sale eclipsed the entire volume of work they were doing from 8 years of sales combined).

When using this method, make sure that you inform the company when they present to a prospect, that the presentation should have an advisory tone rather than a sales tone. This will keep the walls down, give them great advice they might not have received otherwise, and you can still ask the question, “How would something like this be used in your company?”

Who are you?

You need to be prepared to answer this question. Let’s face it, you just pulled together a group of influential people and they are introducing themselves to each other and now it’s your turn – what are you going to say? The elephant in the room will be you if you don’t say something that still gives you permission to be there.

This is NOT the time to give them details on your company, title, product, etc. You are just someone who is helping them out. If you play your cards right, they will ask you about what you do and you can respond reluctantly so that they know you are not there to sell them on anything.

Here are some suggestions on how to answer the “Who are you?” question based on your current situation:

If you are a student or intern

Tell them you are a student/intern and that you help influential executives meet each other as a way to have personal mentoring experiences. The executives will be flattered that you look up to them, and impressed that you would be so bold as to pull something like this together. Odds are good they will offer to mentor you on a go-forward basis as well.

If you are unemployed

When I was in this situation, I would tell them: *“I recently exited a company and had some time on my hands, so I have been helping coordinate some of the private gatherings for the executives in town.”* It’s important that you be truthful; however, saying it this way communicates to them that you are not there to job hunt (at least not right then).

If you are a salesperson

This is the hardest one because telling them you are a salesperson will cause the walls to go up and even though you have the right intentions (to help them meet each other), they might feel like they have been duped into a stealth marketing campaign.

My recommendation is to do some work beforehand to get an alternate title (member of a non-profit board, committee member of an executive membership organization, advisor to an angel investor/venture capital/private equity firm, etc). You need a legitimate, secondary title that can communicate who you are and why you are there in a non-threatening way.

I have a friend who works for a wealth management firm and needs to sell to the wealthy. He leads the membership committee for the local chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) and uses that title in first introduction situations.

Don't overlook just forming your own company for the purpose of making introductions and giving yourself whatever title you want. However, if you decide to do that, avoid two common mistakes:

1. Don't use your own name in the company name
2. Don't use the word consulting (or anything similar) in the name of the company

"Hi, I'm Tom Jones with Jones Consulting" tells them you are likely unemployed and trying to hide it, or that you are trying to make it on your own and probably broke and desperate for consulting work and will be pitching them soon. During my early days, I bought the domain www.ceonetworking.org and printed business cards that said 'Executive Director of CEO Networking'. It was just a website and a business card, but it helped explain who I was to the executives I was meeting.

Your day job will be less of an issue once you get over the hurdle of that first introduction. You need to break through the trust barrier and once you have gained (or maybe a better word is earned) that trust, they will not be concerned with your official company and title.

What's in it for them?

It's worth pointing out that while the techniques in this book will take all the awkwardness out of accessing and meeting influential people, it is also taking all the awkwardness out of them meeting each other. They might be successful executives, but that doesn't mean that they don't feel awkward cold calling a peer, or walking up to a stranger at an event to talk to them. Your call telling them *'Your peers wanted me to reach out and see if you can join them for lunch. They are really interested in getting to know you'* is a huge relief and a confidence builder for them. And it's true! But their peers find it too awkward to express it to them that way - so you are doing it for them. You are fostering communication and relationships in a way that just won't happen without your acting as a facilitator. By expressing to everyone that they really want to meet each other, when they finally get in a room, they are 'extra' friendly to each other.

When I first met a business colleague of mine, Chris, he was a fairly recent college graduate and had been working in marketing at a small company. He wanted to learn how to build high level executive relationships using the skills described in this book. We spent a few weeks together while he watched what I was doing and how I was doing it. The time came for him to attend a VIP reception that I was putting on in order to meet some new executives. I had the Global CFO of Coors host the reception in their executive suite and told Chris that he was on his own to try some of these relationship building techniques.

He was in a room with about 100 of the very top executives in our state and feeling very out of place. Upon noticing one of the younger people in the room sitting alone and looking like he felt out of place also, he decided to introduce himself. He introduced himself and offered to make the introduction to the CFO of Coors. The person replied, *'That would be great! That's why I came, but I don't know any of the people in the room. Thanks!'* As they were walking over to make the introduction, Chris asked this young man where he worked. It turns out that he was the new CFO of another multi-billion dollar company in the state. The introduction was easy to make, and both the CFO of Coors and the other CFO were appreciative to Chris for the introduction.

Influential people's own feelings of insecurity and their lack of any formal process to meet the people they know they need to meet, combined with your willingness to help these influential leaders overcome the awkwardness of meeting each other, is the key to *Accessing the CxO*.

A Word about Fear

Most people who are reluctant to do what is described in this book are that way for one reason: they have a fear of rejection/failure.

The biggest challenge you will face is the internal conflict between your fear and your determination. Fear will likely manifest itself in the form of procrastination. You'll put it off until the pain of inaction is great enough, then you'll take action. Let's take the example of going to the dentist. People wait until their pain is greater than their fear of the dentist, but once it is over, they regret not going in sooner. The good news is that courage is a self-inflicted quality that strengthens every time you use it.

I met a young man a number of years ago who was just out of college. He wanted to be a CFO someday, so he decided to find a CFO to be his mentor. He sent a letter to the CFOs of ten of the Billion Dollar companies in town asking if they would be willing to meet with him once a quarter to mentor him. What do you think the result was?

Seven of the ten said yes. Can you imagine having the CFOs of seven Billion dollar companies as your mentors? In speaking about mentoring with many executives over the years, the overwhelming majority of them indicated that they would be interested in being a mentor to students and entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, few of them actually were acting as mentors. Ironically, their number one reason for not being a mentor was that they had simply **never been asked**. Why had they not been asked? I suspect fear of rejection is probably high on the list of reasons.

The methods in this book follow that same pattern. These are methods which few will implement because they are intimidating to the average person. The reality is that the executives need help meeting other leaders and few will step to the plate to help them because of the fear of rejection. In my opinion, that provides the greater opportunity for those who can overcome that fear.

No influential connection will be made without some sort of risk so decide how you want to go about it, but in the end you will have to set aside fear and take the leap. I heard it once said that, 'A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for.' Take the risk, because to get what you've never had, you must do what you've never done.

The CXO Creed

Let's face it, this is a completely different way of looking at developing influential relationships. To be successful you need to both understand why it works and your role in the process. This book cannot articulate exactly what to say and how to say it in every given situation. This creed, if internalized, will allow you to adapt these principles into any situation.

- The CXO Creed is your commitment to influential people everywhere...
 - There are people you need to know. I may not always know how they will help you, or what ultimately will come of the introductions – but I know, that you know, that these relationships will be important to you in some way.
 - I know you feel that you probably don't do a good job of growing your network of the right people. It takes time and energy away from your current responsibilities. I know that you probably haven't even thought through who you need to meet or why. I'm happy to put the work in to figure that out for you and introduce you to them.
 - I know that I must earn the right to build a relationship with you. I know that in order to earn that right, I have to provide something of value. I am making the decision to provide that value and pursue a relationship regardless of the outcome of any ultimate benefit to myself.
 - I intend to nurture this relationship now and in the future beyond the boundaries of any company, product, or personal need.
 - I may come to you for help someday – thanks in advance for being there for me when I needed you.

The Result of 'Building' Correctly

I recently was contacted by the CEO of a \$500mil software company that is part of my network who wanted to catch-up with me. In our meeting, I was telling him about some deals I was working on and we were exploring how we might be able to work together on some of them. The CEO remarked that he is harder to 'access' than CEOs of many multi-billion dollar companies, but that he makes time for a handful of people, including me. Then he thought back and said that he did not remember how we were connected and how I accomplished this. I gave him a high-level briefing on the processes that you are reading in this book – and refreshed his memory that I had invited him to a private and very informal lunch with some other influential people in town as a means to meet him. I then told him that many of the other executives in the room that day were people I invited because I wanted to meet them also – and that now I have a close relationship with them as well.

He paused...shook his head in disbelief...muttered the word '*genius*', and then said he wanted to buy a copy of my book for every member of his sales team so they could be trained on this process.

Even he could recognize the uniqueness of the approach, the value I was able to create for him from early in the relationship, the trust that was engendered as the foundation for the relationship. He was amazed that more people didn't operate this way – and he wanted to immediately instill these principles into his own organization.



Managing your Network - The Nurturing and Management of Current Relationships

I believe that managing current relationships is the most overlooked aspect of networking. We are so focused on building new relationships (our target accounts) and leveraging them into a sale that we never take the appropriate time to evaluate who we already know and how we can nurture those relationships over time to opportunity.

The term 'social capital' has been used to describe the value you already have in the form of your social network. That network could consist of friends, colleagues, church relationships, former clients, etc. You have already done the hard work of building some level of relationship with them. Don't squander that relationship by letting them languish in your database.

Meaningful Connections

Managing your network implies that you build a regular practice around meeting, talking to, and helping your existing network. It shows that you have an interest in nurturing those relationships, keeping their contact information current, and staying up-to-date on their work and family situations. You need to spend the time and energy to stay relevant to them and introduce them to others in your network they should know.

This may seem daunting if you have a lot of people in your network but the reality is that if you have one meaningful connection with each of them each year that may be enough. Let's talk about what I mean by 'meaningful'.

Newsletters

It's not that newsletters are bad, per-se. But if the business leaders you are trying to connect with are anything like me, they can get 5-15 newsletters PER DAY. My admin spends time regularly unsubscribing me from the ones that get past my junk email filter or I just automatically delete them.

Here is my take on newsletters:

- For me to read a newsletter, it must be from an organization I think is amazing and has some information that is critical to me. I can't think of one right now that meets that requirement.
- A newsletter is very impersonal; therefore, rarely considered meaningful from a relationship perspective even if it has good information.

Let's talk about why people send Newsletters. Newsletters are used when you have a large database of people who are geographically dispersed and you need to communicate

information to them that might be useful and keep them aware of and engaged with your company. I understand the need ... but the execution needs to be more personal. In the same way that any standard 'sales call' will be rejected by an executive, not because of the merits of your product, but simply because it looks, smells and feels like the other 50 sales calls which were distractions from their work that day.

In the section of this book on 'Executive Communications' I talk about this problem in more detail, but it suffices here to say that a standard newsletter format will rarely, if ever, be considered a 'meaningful connection' for an executive. The question then becomes, how to address the need while making a more meaningful connection with the executive. I suggest that you send a more personal sounding email with links to the desired content on your website. This will make the email much shorter (so they can read it on their mobile phone and act). It will also not trigger an automatic impulse to delete the email. They can access the info that is relevant to them instead of being fed information overload of everything. Here is an example:

Jim,

You have a lot on your plate, but I wanted to keep you abreast of developments at our company. I will always make these short and to the point...

- *We just closed a deal with Big Company USA which will almost double our size over the next two years ([Click here to see the Press Release](#)).*
- *Our new product 'Engineer Expert' just won product of the year at the Expo in Dallas, TX ([Click here to see the video of the announcement](#))*
- *Our Exec team built a house for Habitat for Humanity this month. ([Click here to see my purple, smashed finger – and the finished house with the new tenant!](#))*

We're still having fun Jim – and look forward to keeping in touch with you now and in the future. Please reach out to us if we can help you in any way –

Best,

Tom Smith

CEO of ABC Engineering

You see that this is generic enough to be sent to a wide audience, personal enough to be read and appreciated, and provides them access to the information you wanted to give them...if they want to see it.

Topic based small seminar

You are getting warmer. At least I may be able to spend some time talking with you before or after the 'topic portion' of the gathering.

The downside is –

- I am probably only going to come if the topic is highly relevant, and if that is the case, my attention is on the content first and the relationship second.
- You lose all that precious time covering the topic that could be used to build relationships. What if I arrive a few minutes late and have to dash out to my next meeting after? All opportunity to have a meaningful conversation is lost.
- If you are a law firm and the topic is about ‘law stuff’ then I will come knowing that the end-game is to get some business out of me. My walls will be up and my sales pitch radar on. It’s harder to build a relationship in that mode.

A personal call

I have an executive in my network that has their administrative assistant call me at least once a year to schedule a 10min catch up call. I tip my hat to his building a process to manage his relationships! However, that process doesn’t scale very well. I have close to 8,000 contacts – if I had a 10 minute call with each of them it would be over 1,300 hours of calls.

This process also can’t be easily leveraged to meet other people that you, and the person you are re-connecting with, want to meet.

In summary, this works well if you have a small contact database, but there are actually better ways to do this which provide you greater leverage.

Just Lunch

Sometimes I wish that instead of my corporate insurance provider sending me a newsletter each month (which I unsubscribed from the day I wrote this) that they would send the following:

“Jay – I want to invite you to Just Lunch. Each month we will invite a select group of executives from our vast network of customers to lunch to meet each other (a different group each time). We will coordinate everything and attend but we have decided that these will be “no sponsor” events so that there is no expectation of reciprocity. Everyone will simply pay for their own meal.

Our goal is to share with you the relationships that have taken years for us to build. We will provide each attendee with a list of who has confirmed so that you can know in advance who you will be meeting. We will also move the location around to make it convenient for everyone. If you are interested in being invited on occasion, please let me know and I will make sure you are notified as the planning progresses.”

Now they can, not only provide me something I value, but get face time with me and do it in a scalable way. They can also invite company executives they are courting for business as a way to access them and do them a favor at the same time. And the total cost for doing all

this will be about the same cost as the newsletter (one person to organize it and send out an email).

The Irony of Randomness

I was speaking to a friend about some of the principles in this book. He was concerned about being very selective in his efforts to choose the executives he would introduce to each other. His main concern was ensuring that they had things in common (same industry, same problems, etc.) so that they would have something to talk about when they got together.

I eased his concern by telling him that in over a decade of pulling together thousands of introduction meetings/lunches, that the issue of not having things in common had never come up. In fact, the irony in it all was that when I put random people in a room and told them they needed to know each other – they always found the relevant connections. It might be family related (kids the same age, or going to the same school), hobbies, past employers, political issues or simply a passion for business. You just need to make sure you facilitate the conversation in ways that help them uncover their commonality.

My efforts around introductions often are directed with just the opposite thinking as my friend. I find there is less value in connecting people who are in the same industry, or who have much in common. It is the special relationship ‘seasoning’ that happens when you meet people who are different than you and facing issues you have not thought of that makes the introductions that much better.

Let me put it this way... If you were a VP of Operations for a manufacturing company, with whom would you rather have lunch?

- The VP of Operations of another manufacturing company
- The first freely elected Mayor of Baghdad, Iraq
- A retired Rear Admiral in the Navy who flew the space shuttle Columbia
- A successful serial entrepreneur who is starting his fourth company
- The Executive Dir. of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development
- The inventor of the computer hard drive
- The largest Pizza Hut Franchisee in the state who just climbed Mt. Everest for the third time

My suggestion will always be – “Let’s get them all in a room together with you!” In a lunch with those attendees, there will be no shortage of interesting conversation!

A Monthly Open Networking Lunch

Having a big network creates a problem for me, I can get 30+ random calls and emails a month from people who want to ‘grab me for lunch or coffee’. My policy has always been to say ‘yes’ to everyone, but give them all the same date, time and location. This is my monthly Open Networking Lunch! It is always the third Monday of the month at a specific restaurant that saves me a private room. There are three types of people who are invited to the lunch:

1. People who reach out to me, or are introduced to me during the month and want to connect
2. People I need to meet, or catch up with, specific to a project I am working on
3. My admin gives me 10 pages of my current contacts and I highlight people I already know that I have not talked to in a while. She then calls them and invites them to the lunch. The invitation sounds something like this: *“Jay is meeting with a handful of executives downtown on Monday for lunch, and was hoping to introduce you to some of them. He also thought it would be a great opportunity to catch up with you and see how he, or his relationships, could be a resource for anything you are currently working on.”*

This is a great way to be able to meet all the random people who reach out to you, without killing yourself with too many one-on-one meetings. You also discover that they help each other, which gets you largely off the hook of helping them all yourself (which would have resulted from one-on-one meetings). By leveraging this method to meet people that you might not have otherwise met with, you also are exposed to opportunities that would have been overlooked. I often discover great opportunities in conversations with people that I would have not typically met with one-on-one.

This is also a great way to ‘manage’ your current network by sharing your abundant relationships with them. It allows you to get their new contact info, hear about their new projects, and catch up on family and hobbies, all while doing them a favor by helping them grow their own network of interesting people.

LinkedIn Lunch

Because I do a monthly Open Networking Lunch to manage my network and meet new people, I decided to try using LinkedIn to fill the room once. LinkedIn allows you to send a message to 50 people in your network, so I sent the following message to 50 LinkedIn connections I wanted to catch up with:

We are all connected to interesting and influential contacts in LinkedIn whom we have never met. I’ve decided to do something about it by hosting a LinkedIn Lunch. I’ve picked 50 influential people like you in my LinkedIn network who ought to meet, and am inviting you all to lunch to meet each other. We will spend the entire lunch getting to know each other and everyone will simply pay for their own meal.

Just let me know if you can make it - so we have enough chairs around the table. Here are the details:

LinkedIn Executive Lunch

DATE/TIME: Monday, Feb. xxth from 11:30 - 1:00pm

LOCATION: [Restaurant info here]

Best,

Jay Allen
Founder/CEO, CXO.org

Never having done this before, I was curious to see what the result would be. Many of the people I invited, I had never met in person. Ultimately, I had almost half of the 50 people confirm for the lunch, and a number of others send regrets that they could not attend due to other commitments, but ask to be invited in the future.

The lunch was fantastic, the conversation great! Deals were initiated, new relationships formed. I received a number of ‘thank you’ emails afterwards – and all for doing something remarkably simple – which was a huge time saver for me as well.

Things to Do, and to Avoid, when ‘Re-connecting’

If you are going to commit time and resources to manage your network, then you want to maximize the benefit of doing so. There are a number of things you will want to do as part of this effort that will enhance the benefit to you, and those in your network. There are also some things you should avoid. Here are some recommendations:

Things you should do

- Capture more data and update incorrect data

Plan in advance to use this effort as a means to update and enhance your database. Get their admin’s name and contact information, get a personal email address, update new titles or job information. If you are missing large blocks of information – ask them to send you their complete contact info.

- Build relationships with administrative assistants

Administrative assistants can be critical. They know the interests, habits, concerns, passions and needs of the people they support. They are also people who need help, need contacts and need to feel important. They have insecurities, they will lose their jobs and need help finding new jobs. I will often invite them to fill in at a lunch for the executive if they are out of town (they don’t typically accept – but they are appreciative of the offer). Invite the administrative assistants you know to meet each other, or someone that they want to meet. Keep in mind that it can be hard for them to get out of the office for very long.

- Offer help

This is the time to find out what the person you are catching up with is doing, and what they need help with. Find ways to help! You can commit fully to the process for some, and do small and simple things for others. Here are some examples:

- For many, they just need to be connected to the right resource to help them. This is an opportunity to ‘tithe your social capital’ (use the asset you have in the form of

contacts and intelligence to connect them to relationship that can help). The only thing needed may be an email introduction and they can take it from there.

Through this process I have helped people find jobs, helped deals get done, helped build advisory boards, helped secure funding for companies, etc.

- Roll up your shirtsleeves! I have had CEOs of large non-profits ask for help raising funds which involved a 90 day commitment to planning events and inviting my contacts. I have pulled together 30 people on a weekend to clean up the property in front of a restaurant that my friend owned. Be prepared to commit when appropriate!

- Proactively involve other people in the process

Keith Ferrazzi wrote a book, 'Never Eat Alone'. I would add, 'Always consider inviting others to a 'catching up' lunch'. Okay, mine doesn't roll-off the tongue as well, but the point is valid. If you are meeting up with someone to 'catch-up', always ask yourself if inviting a few other people would enhance the experience for everyone.

I do this all the time. I tell someone we should meet for lunch and catch up, and then when they arrive I have several others there as well (to whom I probably said the same thing). They may say, 'I thought this was just going to be Jay and I', but they never regret meeting the others that I brought. In the end, it is often one of the other people I brought who ends up providing them the most value – and I get the credit without having to do anything!

This is also a perfect opportunity to invite someone you 'want to meet'. However, be wise when doing this. You will need to match position-to-position and power-to-power. If I am catching up with an influential executive, I can invite another influential executive that I want to meet. It makes me look good, and both of them get value in the introduction.

- Provide a strong 'slipstream' for your executive contacts to 'draft' within

This is a concept that I have seen in other great networkers, and it wasn't until successful business leader, angel investor and networker extraordinaire Judy Robinett explained it in this way that I was able to articulate it for others.

Drafting is used to reduce wind resistance and requires that two objects align at the same speed allowing the lead object to create a slipstream that the trailing object can exploit to gain momentum. Now think of this in terms of you and an executive you are trying to build a relationship with (let's call her Jane) entering a room of other executives. Jane will probably be hesitant to 'toot her own horn' to build credibility with the group. That becomes your job. Toot Jane's horn! Tell them all the great things she has done and what a great person she is. Jane will gain speed of credibility and trust

from your introduction, and reduce the resistance to value creation conversations. She can also blush and appear modest and humble, while still getting the point across about her influential standing in the room.

Good teammates draft on each other. One will draft, and use the slipstream to gain momentum and leapfrog ahead of their teammate. Then they will provide a slipstream for their teammate to do the same. A good executive networking teammate will, after you have provided a flowery introduction for them, do the same for you.

This is very useful when you find out very interesting details about an executive that may not be business related, or are things they accomplished in their past that don't typically come up in a business conversation. Let me give you an example:

There is an executive in our network who has a small, early-stage company on the outskirts of Denver. If you ran into him, he would not be wearing an expensive suit or a fancy tie. Quite frankly, he would not stand out to you if you met him at a networking event and you might even avoid him. But when I enter a room with this man, I make sure that nobody will ignore him! I let the room know that he was the inventor of the PDF (FrameMaker), which he sold to Adobe. That he is one of the founding investors of one of the largest and most successful Private Equity firms on the West Coast. I will mention that he has summited Mt. Everest three times, and would have summited a fourth, but he was on the mountain when the accident documented in the book Into Thin Air occurred and he helped rescue that party from the mountain. I will let them know that when he is not running his new company, he trains for and runs ultra-marathons (50-100 miles) and is at the top of his age group in wins.

Would you ignore this man after that introduction? Do you think he could use that slipstream to his advantage to have instant credibility and find and pursue value in the room? How do you think my relationship with that executive will be in the future...am I someone he will want around when he is meeting other important people?

Things you should avoid

- Avoid providing the wrong introduction, a weak introduction, or none at all

If you are going to provide an introduction of one executive to another via email, then make sure that there is a high probability of success. When I say success, I mean that the person you are introducing them to will accept the connection and be willing to become involved, and that positive outcomes are likely. If I have a friend looking for work, and they are trying to get into a large company in town, I may not offer up an introduction to the head of Human Resources at that company (even though I know them well). It would probably just annoy the head of HR, and not result in a positive outcome for my friend. A better option may be to introduce my friend to an executive from the company who recently exited and is unemployed. They can commiserate on

the job search, and my friend can get intelligence about the firm, and the players in the company – and possibly even a warm introduction from the former executive to his friends still in place there. The odds of a positive outcome are much higher.

I occasionally get email introductions that look like this:

Jay, meet Ted. I know you guys will like each other.

I have no context as to why we should talk. I have no contact information for Ted other than an email address. I also don't know Ted's last name so I can do some research on him. If you are going to do email introductions, then have a good standard format which includes details. This is covered in more detail in the section on executive communications.

I will say that even a bad introduction is better than no introduction. If you say you are going to make an introduction, then make sure you follow up. The worst thing you can do is commit and not deliver.

- Don't ask, when meeting with someone, 'So, what can I do for you?'

People who do this are either asking it to give the 'perception' of caring or too lazy to spend the time identifying things which would truly be helpful. Think back. Have you ever answered, or heard anyone answer that question by saying, 'Yes, I have a list of things you can help me with here in my pocket!' If you really want to help someone, then you need to ask questions that divulge what they need, or their interests or passions. Then you can proactively suggest how to help without ever asking this useless question.

- Don't pass on 'bad apples', without warning

Ideally, you don't want to pass on a bad apple at all. A bad apple is someone who is doing networking in all the wrong ways and refuses to take, or apply, coaching around that issue. If you absolutely can't avoid passing on a bad apple via an introduction, provide a warning to the recipient (in a separate email). They will appreciate you for the heads-up, and it will prevent the introduction from damaging your relationship with them.

Managing Data

For many, a good first step in the Manage process is simply getting your arms around who you already know. Not everyone is good at putting all their current relationships into a single location (like the Contacts on your computer or phone). Make a decision as to how you will manage the information on your current relationships and start to consolidate to one platform, or at least one system of record.

You should also consider setting some standards around how you will format and manage your data. Here are some examples that I use:

1. I use Outlook Contacts as my primary database of contacts
2. The person's company email is always in [Email1]
3. The person's admin's email is always in [Email2]
4. The person's personal email is always in [Email3]
5. Always retain the person's former company/title and contact info in the Contact Notes when they change jobs so that, if their previous company is all I can remember about them, at least I can find the contact with a database search of their previous company's name.

Always be improving your data

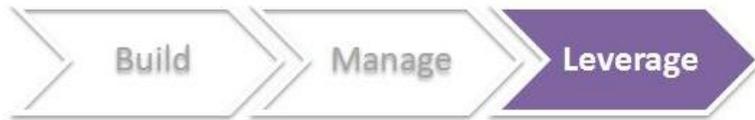
As discussed earlier in this section, you should use every interaction as an opportunity to capture new data and correct old data.

Living the Golden Rule

As you read the strategies in this book and how to access and build relationships with influential people, take time to stop and look at yourself. Who already looks to you as being the influential person they need to meet? How can you build your network of people who are rising stars and influential future leaders?

I had a boss once that used to take one of the 'up-and-coming' managers out to lunch each week. He was a smart boss – because, when is the best time to network? When you least need the connections - when you are at the top of your game, because it is far easier to build those relationships while you are at the top. Over time, these managers will move to different companies, to different states and will become the leaders of the future. By developing those relationships now, then nurturing them over time, his network will be exponentially better as time progresses.

In summary, the Manage function of networking is simply living the golden rule and become the type of influential person that you are hoping to find in those you seek to meet. A person who is interested in others, keeps in touch with them over time, offers to serve them and is a true friend. No – not everyone does this well. In fact, few build the processes and take the time to perform this function in an effective manner. You will see that as you address this critical function and do it well (or at least better), you will stand out among those you interact with as a leader to be emulated.



Leveraging your Network – How to Create Value

This part of networking is perhaps the most difficult to master. It puts the power into the hands of the other person while you cross your fingers and hope that you will get the outcome you desire. The personality traits that allow someone to succeed at building and managing relationships are different than the personality traits that allow you to succeed at leveraging your network. At least that is what most people think...

The reality is that if you have done your work well in building and managing influential relationships, then you have an opportunity to use those same skills to leverage relationships. This is not intuitive. We will be talking about doing things in a way that is outside of the 'industry norm'. Selling in a personal relationship is COMPLETELY different than selling in a sales relationship.

In a Sales Relationship:

- I am only there to tell you about my product/service
- This one situation binds us together and defines our relationship – if you don't need the product/service, we go our separate ways
- Your walls are up – expecting a 'pitch'
- You are going to 'discount' anything I say, because I will want to position my product/service in the best possible light and may exaggerate
- I will probably focus on 'features and benefits' rather than relationship
- I may have to provide a lot of detail to convince you that we should take the next step – or for you to act as an advocate for me into the organization

In a Personal Relationship

- This sales discussion does not define our relationship – we will go hang out and help each other out after this discussion regardless of the outcome
- Your walls are not up – quite the opposite, you are listening to 'help' if you can
- You trust what I tell you about the product/service, and I am more honest about the realities of the product/service because I know you will help me if you can. I also know that you will genuinely consider the purchase if it is a fit.
- Fewer details may be required – just enough to help you make a determination about possible fit. You may even try to accommodate the purchase if it is only a marginal fit.

Let me give you an example of these two worlds...

Using the processes described in this book, I built a relationship with the SVP of IT for Western Union. He was a great guy and we had a trusted relationship. We even spent time going to ball

games and other activities. I had introduced him to many peers and other executives, and we had done deals together also.

One day I brought a vendor with me to his office – someone that had been trying to meet with him about their product/service. The person I knew as my friend vanished, and someone I had never met appeared (figuratively speaking). My friend ripped this vendor up one side and down the other then chewed him up and spit him out. I had never seen anything like it. I found out later that my friend was known for treating salespeople like this, and the only reason I had not known was because I had a personal relationship with him, not a sales relationship. Not to say I didn't sell to him – I did. But I was selling to a friend.

Remember that you are working with probabilities and percentages throughout the Leverage process. My experience over almost 12 years of developing and working this process is that, if you are doing it right, you should be in the 90% success rate for all three areas (90% will say yes to building a relationship, 90% will participate in continuing the relationship process, and 90% of those will accept engagement in the leveraging process). This doesn't mean that you will close 90% of the deals – but it does mean that 90% should accept the challenge to be available to you in the leveraging process. This may include:

- Having a serious conversation with you about your product or service
- Advising you on how to penetrate their company with your product/service
- Being a resource/guide to introduce you to the decision makers in the organization

Don't get discouraged when you get a 'no'. You should get nine 'yes' for every 'no' – which is a much better percentage than traditional methods.

I was training one of our staff on how to make cold-calls to high-level executives in major companies to invite them to engage with us. I told him that he should only expect about 97% of them to say 'yes' – and not to let the 3% get him discouraged (what an odd concept coming from traditional cold-calling). It was several months before he got his first 'no'. He couldn't understand it! He asked me, 'Did I say it wrong? Why would they say no?' I had to explain to him that if they truly did not see value from the pitch he gave, then they are probably not a good fit for us anyway. For example – one of his 'no's' was from the CIO of General Mills. It turns out he was retiring in a few months and really didn't need to connect with other executives at that point in his life. He retired, and the new CIO that took over the position said 'yes'.

When it comes to leveraging a relationship, there are specific strategies that you should consider. These are strategies that we have used very successfully, but require a bit of nuance which is developed with practice.

The Law of Two Favors

The Law of Two Favors is something we intuitively did early on – and was one of the principle ways that we achieved success in leveraging relationships. It was only after we started getting asked how we were so successful that we gave it a name.

The basic principle is that even though I may have a very specific reason for developing a relationship with an individual (they are a sales target, they can influence a deal, I need to introduce them to a client, etc.) – I cannot mention to them what I need or how they can help me until I have done two significant favors for them. Bottom line...the relationship must come first – and it needs to be a real relationship. A friendship implies a ‘give and take’ relationship where you help each other – you are choosing to ‘give’ first.

Here is an example from my early days just prior to starting CXO. This was really the first time I had ever lived the Law of Two Favors – but it had a huge impact on me.

For six months I had tried unsuccessfully to get a meeting with the CIO of McDATA. His admin was one of the most difficult gatekeepers I had run into. I was working for Sprint selling data center services at the time and it was the beginning of the dot com crash. In an effort to actually build a relationship, I email introduced him to another executive (I don't even recall who). It turns out (luck on my part) that the introduction proved valuable for him. I was able to get him to a small lunch with a few other executives, and learned that his fiancé was looking for work. I made a few introductions for his fiancé and ended up landing her a job! At this point, the CIO was willing to have any meeting I wanted with him – and he introduced me to some of the other executives in the company. He left McDATA shortly after and moved to Florida. We kept in touch and he ultimately moved back to Denver. I helped him with his job search until he landed and we remained good friends. He has provided me with several business opportunities and has introduced me to quite a few of his business associates.

Herein lies the magic of the Law of Two Favors. You are really not ‘leveraging a contact’ once you have done it – you are asking a friend for help. The two favors don’t need to take months to accomplish. In the example of the CIO of Frontier Airlines I gave earlier in the book, it took about two weeks. However, be advised, it does take time, and effort, and a heart willing to serve, and a desire to truly build a long term relationship. If you try to fake that, they will be able to tell that you are just a salesperson trying to be in a position to ‘have something over them’ that you can leverage. Don’t consider this as a way to do something for them that earns you the right to then ‘cash in your chips’. How you ask for the thing that you need will determine if it feels like cashing in chips to the executive, which we will talk about that later in this chapter.

The Third Party Endorsement

One thing that became crystal clear over almost 12 years of working with influential business leaders is that they naturally have thick skin when it comes to salespeople talking to them about ANYTHING. You have to remember, they are getting 50 sales calls a day in some instances, plus hundreds of emails. In order to get work done, they must build walls and hire gatekeepers to keep

the noise-to-sound ratio tolerable. Is it any wonder that when a salesperson tells them, 'this product/service is fantastic and you really need to take a look at it', that they ingest those words with a huge dose of skepticism? Let's face it – you probably have a quota to meet this month. Of course you are going to say it is a great product/service!

Let's talk about the top four ways to get around this via a third party endorsement – in reverse order of effectiveness

1. A traditional client reference

These are great, but...you typically don't get a chance to use this until your target customer has already heard your pitch and is considering the purchase. We are talking about how you get the opportunity to actually give them the pitch in the first place. Offering them an opportunity to speak to a client as a lead-in to get a first meeting won't work.

Another problem with a traditional client reference is that the executive knows it is 'staged'. In other words, you picked the one client who is a former employee of your company, is married to your sister, and who owes you money. Okay, maybe that is not exactly true, but you get the drift of what they will be thinking. Executives have even begun to turn the tables on the vendors by asking to speak with clients who canceled contracts with you to get the real scoop on your company.

2. A video endorsement from a client

This is a little better. At least you could send this to someone, or put it on your website so that it could be used in a 'first touch' with a prospect to try to get a meeting. The downside is that they are still 'staged' and suspect because of that. Unless the endorsement is from a prominent executive with a known reputation for being very impartial – it will still be consumed with skepticism.

3. A staged endorsement by a peer done face-to-face during a 'recreational' activity with a group of prospects

This is common practice for many organizations. You invite a group of CFOs out to a hockey game together, and before the game they get a sales pitch which includes one of the company's clients endorsing the company and their product or service. The downside is that it is still staged and therefore, suspect. These can also be expensive to pull off – which is why you get prospects to attend (they may not be able to afford it on their own). The upside is that the CFOs can grill the client during the hockey game to see if they can 'break' the endorser into telling them the real scoop on the product/service. And, of course, they get to see a hockey game.

4. A spontaneous endorsement by a peer which is done face-to-face

This is the best case scenario. And everything in this book should tell you exactly how to pull this off easily time-after-time. Let's say it again; you are just pulling together an introduction of one influential leader (your client) with several other influential leaders or peers (your prospective clients). Your company's name never came up in the formation of this introduction – you are just acting as an introduction facilitator. They are appreciative of the help to grow their network of the right people. During the meeting you will connect on a personal level (rather than just business) and can casually tell the group that Joe (your client) is an amazing _____ and a fantastic _____ (you are creating a slipstream for him to draft in), and that he even makes a good client. That will provide him the opening to brag about you and your company to the group. Mission accomplished!

When an executive tells his/her peers at an informal gathering that they use your product/service and it is fantastic, and they really should take a look at it, and you are a great person – they believe.

Using 'Chits' or 'Tit-for-Tat' to Leverage Relationships

I want to make a distinction to start this section. There is something very real and valuable called 'the law of reciprocity'. It implies that when you give of yourself, your time, your effort, your means to help someone else, they will naturally want to reciprocate. This is a useful and valuable law and one that every salesperson is aware of. Sometimes it can be difficult to 'harness' what this law implies in a meaningful or consistent way. One way that salespeople harness this law is to interpret the law of reciprocity as 'using chits, or Tit-for-Tat'. They might even point to 'the Law of Two Favors' that I mentioned earlier in this book as a type of 'tit-for-tat'. Let me be clear on this issue: I DO NOT ENDORSE USING CHITS OR THE TIT-FOR-TAT SALES METHOD.

This is not to say that those methods don't work - they can and do. However, that mentality is very limiting and never develops the type of relationship that can endure over time. You may get what you want in the short term, but each time you 'use a chit' you weaken the relationship and brand yourself a 'relationship user'. 'Tit-for-tat' relationship management is the very essence of 'you owe me' thinking. That thinking will destroy your ability to build trust during the 'manage' part of Building, Managing and Leveraging influential relationships. The last thing you need is for people to think when you call them, '*Jay's calling to do me a favor – he must need something...*'

I only endorse building relationships that are real and will endure whatever jobs they have now or may have in the future, and any jobs you have now or may have in the future. The Law of Two Favors is a way to think and act when it comes to initiating a relationship. It is a way to reinforce humility, service and unselfishness in your relationship building efforts.

You probably have your own examples of people who are relationship users. Here is one that I remember well:

I had a great relationship with a Senior HR leader in town. She had recently left a significant role in a large enterprise and was pursuing a 'start-up' of her own. I had already provided some

introductions and help for her to get some traction including potential investors, strategic partners, etc.

I needed an introduction to the person in her former company who had taken her role in HR. It was someone she had mentored and knew well. In the call with her to discuss that possible introduction, she said, 'I wonder if you could do me a favor first, I need an introduction to (name) as a possible client. If you could do that for me, I think we can talk about an introduction for you'. Essentially, she decided to hold my request hostage until I did her favor. I ultimately did the favor she requested, although not with my usual zeal, but I never got the introduction I needed. The relationship was severely damaged; not because she didn't provide the introduction, but because I realized she only saw me as a means to an end – not a friend.

A Friend Helping a Friend

How then would I describe the philosophy behind leveraging friend-to-friend relationships? It is a dynamic that I think most salespeople have not fully explored. Let me give an example:

Last week I was contacted by a longtime friend who had moved away about four years ago. He informed me that he was moving back to the area – just a few blocks from my house. I was really happy for him and asked when he was making the move. He said, 'That is what I wanted to talk to you about. We will be moving this weekend and we could really use some help getting things unloaded.' I got the address and time from him and my 15 year old son and I met him at his house that Saturday. For five hours we moved items, assembled furniture, etc. I must say, we were sore and tired afterwards.

My question to you is, did my friend use a 'Chit'? Is he now in a debtor situation? Do I feel like he has 'drawn down' his relationship bank account and 'owes me one'?

While I do understand that there will be a sense of reciprocity felt by my friend, and that friends who only take and never give (which I don't consider a real friendship) can reach a point where they drain the relationship dry; in general I adhere to the following belief: *When friends are allowed to serve each other, the bond between them is strengthened.*

This is just the opposite of a tit-for-tat relationship, where 'using a chit' weakens the relationship, and another favor must be done to get back to equilibrium. Eventually, the math gets too complex in this type of a relationship. In a real friendship, nobody is counting.

So, when you ask the friends in your network for help in pursuing your career objectives, it is simply an opportunity to serve you, their friend. You need to understand this dynamic and not create some awkward sales pitch you read in a book which will only confuse your friends and cause them to say, 'You could have just asked'.

Going from Having a Friend ... to Closing a Deal

I think that salespeople in general tend to over-think how to do the 'ask' when it comes time to create value from a relationship. If you have done the Build and Manage steps properly, and you

have a real relationship, then asking for what you need is the same as asking a friend for help. Here is an example:

Joe, I've been meaning to ask you something. I know my company has a keen interest in doing business with your company. I don't even know if you guys use a product like this, or if there would be value in exploring a relationship, but I thought I would ask your opinion and advice.

I know this goes against everything that you have ever learned in those well researched, Harvard Business Review articles and the leading sales technique books you have read. But those articles and books never started with the assumption that you were personal friends with the person you were selling to.

The way it is worded above does several things:

- It sounds like a friend asking for advice and help
- It allows the other person to help you navigate the best way to a sale if there is any possible opportunity in the company
- It gives the other person an 'out' if he/she knows it is not a fit and wants to break it to you easy
- It allows the relationship to not take damage if there is no sales opportunity

What I have found in years of using this method is that they will typically be very transparent about what the opportunities are in the company, how to go about the sales process, how they can help with the process, how to position yourself for maximum success, what political hurdles you will need to jump over, who to avoid, internal politics that will need to be played, who the decision makers are, etc. They won't necessarily say immediately that they will buy your product/service, but they will tell you exactly what you need to do to be successful, and will be your advocate in the process. You will still need to have a good product/service and you still need to sell, but you are in the door with someone watching your back!

Again, this book is not about 'how to sell', it is about 'how to access the CxO'. Once you have access (which can be the hardest part), you still need to sell and deliver.

Let me give you a personal example:

A number of years ago I was retained by the state of Wyoming to help with regional economic development efforts. Rather than just advertising the benefits of doing business in Wyoming, they wanted to take specific business opportunities in the state directly to the CxO's of the major companies in the region who should be involved in the deals.

In our discussions, we identified an opportunity. The state is a significant exporter of energy. They export coal to other states that used it to generate electricity. They also generate electricity which they transport to other states. We asked the question, 'How can we consume more electricity in Wyoming for projects that can create jobs?' The idea of building a large data center park in Cheyenne was floated, and we began to explore how to make that idea reality.

I reached out to the CIOs and CTOs of the largest companies in Colorado and asked them to advise us on this project given their proximity to Cheyenne and the potential to leverage what would be built. Forty of them accepted and participated on an Advisory Board to explore what might be possible and how to structure the project. One of the executives met with us and gave us fairly detailed plans on a data center park they were planning on building, but had not yet built.

It was discovered that The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) was looking to build a new supercomputing data center facility and evaluating sites. The fact was, they had been looking for a while and had already narrowed the options down to three possible locations. They had already explored the possibility of Wyoming, and it had not made the cut.

I called the Director of NCAR, and said, *'There is a major project that has been quietly underway that you need to be aware of. Cheyenne, WY is developing the plans for a major data center park. The heads of technology of forty of the largest companies in the region are advising them on this project. I'm sure you were not aware of this as you were doing your due diligence on site options. We should to set up a time to meet and give you the details of this project.'* In less than seven days, we were in a meeting with the entire leadership team of NCAR to discuss the possibilities. Within 120 days, they chose Cheyenne as the site of their new supercomputing facility. The grand opening of the \$70mil facility was Oct. 15th, 2012. Wyoming has since announced that Microsoft is building a major data center in the park as well.

The key things to take notice of in this example are:

- Involve influential people in 'evaluating and advising' on interesting potential projects. It can be fun for them, and you will get ideas and access to intelligence and resources that you can't get any other way.
- You still have to have a good product in order to consummate the sale. You might say my part was the easy part (getting influential people to pay attention). The hard work was negotiating the deal.
- Become the expert at Accessing the CxO, and you can delegate the closing of the sale and implementation. Salespeople and implementers are easy to find and hire. The ability to access influential people efficiently is hard to find and hire. Your value will increase, and your workload will decrease.

The Friend's Dilemma

During the process of leveraging your influential relationships into opportunity, you will occasionally have a friend commit to do something for you, and then as time passes, you realize that they have either forgotten about their commitment, gotten busy with other things, or they are ignoring you intentionally. How do you address the issue and get things moving again without creating awkward tension around the issue?

While you want to ‘nudge’ them into action – there is the very real dilemma of not knowing ‘why’ they have been unresponsive. They could have been in an accident, on vacation, fired and no longer working there, mad at you, caught up in other things and just forgetful. You want to make sure you don’t assume anything with your response that may backfire for you.

I once had a salesperson I had met 12 months earlier send me an email informing me he had changed jobs and was working for a software company whose technology CXO might want to leverage. He offered to provide me use of it for free for my members and wanted to talk about the possibility.

I was interested, but it was an extremely busy week for me and I put it in my ‘follow-up when I can’ folder to address later in the week or the following week.

Three days after he sent the initial email, I received the following email from him:

Hello Jay

I assume that you have no interest in my offer to you concerning your networks. If I’m incorrect please let me know.

Suddenly, I was a lot less interested in connecting with him on his offer. His comments reflected a poor sense of judgment, and made assumptions that were not accurate. I’m sure he learned this strategy in some sales textbook on ‘How to get to ‘No’ faster’.

The best course of action if a request is not responded to in a timely fashion is to create what I call ‘the friend’s dilemma’. In essence, the goal here is to lightly allude to the original commitment while you reach out to them for a completely different favor that you want to do for them. While I do not subscribe to the ‘using chits’ method of relationship management, I do recognize that people are wired to think that way. Hopefully, you have already done favors for this individual that warranted their attention to the original request that you made of them. By reaching out to do yet another favor, they will feel guilty that they did not deliver on your request. They will want to say ‘yes’ to your offer of the new favor, but will not want to reply to you until they have a current status update on their original commitment to you. Here is what this looks like in practice:

I ask Jim, the CMO of a major Insurance Company, who I already have a relationship with, to let me know who on his team could look at an emerging digital marketing technology that we think has some promise. He says – ‘no problem, I meet with my team next week. Let me discuss it with them and get back to you with an answer.’

Two weeks pass with no response. I send an email back to him that says something like this: *‘Jim, I met up with the former VP of Marketing Strategy for Yahoo this week. She is helping us on another deal similar to the one we spoke about a couple of weeks ago. I should introduce you guys at some point. Hope things are well with you – let’s catch up when you have a second.’*

This approach demonstrates both your loyalty and friendship without judging them for their lack of responsiveness. Their reaction will typically either be an apology and explanation of why they have

not been responsive, or a status update on their efforts. You will see that this process can actually strengthen the relationship between you and them, and a desire to continue to help you with your efforts.

Leveraging these Concepts in other Areas

In the first chapter I said that while the principles discussed in this book could apply to virtually any individual or company trying to leverage the power of networking, I wrote this book primarily for companies who serve (with products or services) the 'large enterprise'. However, by becoming efficient using the methods in this book, you can now access influential people to match them with virtually anything they value or that interests them. Have fun with it! Be creative!

Opportunities Multiplied

Here are some examples of things we have gotten involved with which were valuable for us, interesting for the executives we wanted to meet, and help build our 'brand' as influencers.

I read an article one day that described a 60's era Titan missile silo complex that was 100' underground just 11 miles east of town. The owners were trying to sell the land and the complex. I cold called them and offered to help get some wealthy and influential people to take a look at the land and facility (because I wanted to see it, and I knew the people I was trying to build relationships would want to see it). The owners graciously accepted my offer.

Within a week I was helping give tours of this amazing underground facility with some of the most powerful and wealthy executives in the state. Even today, years later, the executives mention it when we get together.

A local investment firm that I know invested in a company that provided fractional ownership of luxury suites at major sports venues. They needed some help promoting the concept and facilities to the companies in the area so we offered to help them host some promotional events in the suites. We were paid to take influential people to professional sporting and entertainment events in the suites so that they could explore the concept. It gave us a great reason to call executives we wanted to meet and also do favors for those we already knew. We made the gatherings 'influential networking' events for the people we invited.

I still remember hanging out with a bunch of executives I wanted to meet, eating prime rib in a warm luxury suite watching a professional football game while it snowed outside and thinking – I can't believe I'm getting paid for this...

I got an email one day from an organization that helps professional athletes transition upon retirement from athletics to the business world. He had relationships with all the professional athletes, but needed help connecting them with the right successful business leaders as mentors in their quest to make the transition to the business world.

I was able to spend time, and develop relationships, with professional athletes from football, MMA, Hockey, etc. and connect them with influential leaders that I wanted to get to know. The executives almost universally were interested in meeting the professional athletes and really appreciated my connecting them to these individuals.

We had a billion dollar company in town land a new President from out-of-state. I offered to help him get better connected to his peers in the area. Those introductions worked so well for him, that I was given a multi-year contract to make executive-to-executive introductions into the major companies they thought might be strategic partners or large clients in the region. It was simple to call the CEO of a large company and say that I was calling on behalf of the President of another large company who wanted to find time to swing by and make their acquaintance.

I'm sure as you think about the things you are passionate about, and the opportunities in your region or field of expertise, that you can come up with other ways to leverage the concepts in this book into personal opportunity. The concept that important people want to meet other important people and be exposed to interesting things is universal. Tap into the experiences that are most interesting to you!

Finding a Mentor

Another way to leverage 'Accessing the CxO' is to access them as a mentor. I have discovered something disturbing and yet promising over the years dealing with high-profile executives. Virtually 100% of them have expressed a willingness and interest in being a mentor to a student, entrepreneur or small business. However, only about 5% of them are actually doing it. The #1 reason they give for not being a mentor is, 'I never get asked'.

What a great opportunity for those individuals willing to ask! Let me give you some examples of how this has been used by those I have met over the years:

1. As mentioned in the section of this book about fear, I met a young man a number of years ago who was just out of college and looking for a mentor. He wanted to be a CFO someday, so he decided to find a CFO to be his mentor. He sent a letter to the CFOs of ten of the Billion Dollar companies in town asking if they would be willing to meet with him once a quarter to mentor him. Seven of the ten CFO's said 'yes'. Can you imagine having the CFOs of seven of the largest companies in the state as your personal mentors all because you had the guts to ask?
2. I met with a group of college students studying Hospital Administration. We talked about mentoring and I suggested they reach out to the Presidents of the largest hospitals in the state and ask if they would be willing to mentor them. Only one person in the class took me up on the challenge. He reached out boldly to the President of the region's largest hospital, and that President said 'yes' to be his mentor. He was stunned – and babbling as he called and told me the good news!
3. We had an intern who was interested in working in the financial services industry. I asked him which company he would be most interested in working for. He said Oppenheimer (a large mutual fund company). I suggested he reach out to the President of the Oppenheimer Service Center and ask if he would be his mentor. He emailed and then called the President requesting that he meet with him once a month as a mentor. The President said 'yes' – and ultimately hired him.

I would, however, give some guidance around how to ask for a mentor. It should include several key elements:

- Relevancy (they must be able to see the relevancy of the match)
- Flattery (lightly sprinkled)
- The option to meet once before having to decide to take you on as a mentee
- Time commitment expectation up front (30 minutes ideal, no more than an hour)
- An acknowledgement of their sacrifice to help you
- Connect on a human level (don't be too formal)

Here is an example of what you might send:

Frank,

Let's face it – this communication is a long shot, but here I go...

I was asked last week to identify the person in town who I would most like to emulate as I pursue my life-long career journey in the field of finance. The answer I ultimately arrived at was you – the CFO of one of the most prestigious companies in town.

I honestly don't know how to get from where I am now, to where you are, but I am determined to believe it is possible with time, effort and the right guidance. That guidance part is the reason for my letter. I am quick to acknowledge that left to my own devices, I may not be able to make this journey. At the same time, I know that you are a busy person with significant responsibility. However, I am determined to bravely, but humbly ask for your guidance.

Frank, would you be willing to spend 30 minutes with me sometime this month to hear the vision I have for my career and provide me some blunt, but hopefully inspiring, guidance? You could call this mentoring – but I hope it turns in to something more like friendship. We can decide together in our first meeting whether any further meetings are something you would be open to.

I will follow up in the next week with a phone call to (fingers crossed) arrange a mutually convenient time to meet. Should you need to contact me before then, I can be reached on my cell phone at 555-222-8644 or email at johndoe@isp.net. I truly look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

John Doe

As you pursue mentorship from influential people (and do shoot high!) – I would welcome hearing about your successes.

A Note on Executive Communications

One thing I have found in 12 years of communicating with very influential people is that a number of things I learned in high school and college about communicating with them do not work. You need to unlearn many things if you want them to respond to your emails or develop a relationship with you. This cannot be underestimated – so I have committed a chapter just to address methods of communication with influential leaders.

The Test

Every six months or so we bring in a group of college students as potential interns for the CXO organization. These interns will be interacting with some of the top business leaders in the regions they are assigned – so communication skills are critical. However, we always assume that they have been taught the standard, formal way of executive communications. Because of this assumption, we always begin the session with a test...

We break the prospective interns into groups of five or six and assign them several scenarios which mirror what they would do as an intern in our organization. The goal is to see what communication strategies they would use to execute the tasks. Here is what we see happen 100% of the time:

Scenario: Cold call an executive of a major company to introduce them to another executive (or executives) over lunch.

Result (script they came up with):

'Hello, is Mr. Jones available? Hi, I am an intern for CXO. We are an organization that provides opportunities for executive leaders to collaborate with other leaders. We are organizing a lunch on Sept. 14th and wanted to discuss your participation. If you have a few minutes, I can tell you about the benefits of membership in CXO and about this event...'

The problem with an approach like this is that it sounds like a vendor pitch. The formality of the introduction (Mr. Jones) is an immediate flag for the admin that you are either in sales or looking for a job. Walls will go up immediately and you will likely never reach the executive. Nobody wants to hear features and benefits on the phone; you just want to get rid of the person calling. You also don't want to call representing 'an organization'; you want to call representing the executives that want to meet Mr. Jones.

Here is how the call would go if I were calling using the techniques described in this book:

Me: 'Hi, is Frank around today?'

Admin: 'I'm sorry, what is this in regards to?'

Me: 'This is Jay Allen. Some of the CEOs of the major companies in town were planning to grab lunch on Sept. 14th and wanted to see if Frank was going to be in town and could join them. They do this every once in awhile just to get away from the vendors and have a chance to get to know each other better. Do you know what Frank's schedule looks like that day?'

Admin: 'And who are you again?'

Me: 'I'm the schmuck who had some spare time and got roped into coordinating all the details for them – which has proven to be much harder than I anticipated. You and I will have to compare notes sometime – I'm sure I could learn a thing or two.'

Admin: 'Right now Sept. 14th looks open for him. Can you send me the details so that I can review this with him?'

Me: 'Sure, what's your email?'

Note that the admin will almost always want an email with more details and will give you his/her email address. My email would read as follows:

Admin's First Name,

Just a follow up to our conversation this morning...

The CEO's of some of the major companies in town try to get together for lunch a few times a year. It's always very informal (no vendors, speakers or sponsors). I know they are very interested in getting to know Frank better and would love if he could find time to break away and join them when they meet next on Sept. 14th. They are planning to meet at 11:30 at Café Rialto downtown.

Let me know if that might work for Frank and I can get him a list of the CEOs that are confirmed in advance so he knows who to look for when he gets there. Also, if he can't make this one, let me know if he would like to get a heads-up next time they plan on getting together.

All the best,

Jay Allen

Note that even if he can't come to the lunch, I get a commitment from him to be available for me to contact him for something similar in the future.

Now go back and read the initial script done by the interns. While it conforms to the standards they have learned in school regarding formality and covering the features and benefits of the offering, it doesn't have the unique character to accomplish the task at hand: Accessing the CxO. The good news is that everyone else will be doing it that way, leaving the door open for you to use a better way and really differentiate yourself from the crowd.

Collecting Contact Information

Every contact you have when working on building relationships with influential people is an opportunity to gather information and position yourself for the future. Make sure you leverage those touch points to maximize success.

When you cold-call an executive to offer an introduction to other executives, have a paper and pen handy and make sure you write down the name of their administrative assistant. If they are not able to attend, then ask if they would like to be notified if and when some of these leaders plan to try to get together in the future? They will almost always say 'yes', which now gives you permission to reach out to them in the future to pursue a similar attempt. Always ask, 'should I copy your admin?' – that will get you their admin's email address.

If you are only coordinating with the admin, always offer to send her the details of the gathering in an email ('I can email you the details if that is helpful'). They will be appreciative and will also quickly give you their email address.

Never waste an interaction – continue to build the profile and contact information for your target relationships. When they change jobs, you will ask for a resume to help them job search. It will have their personal email, home address and cell number. Over time, the information you have collected and carefully stored will ensure you can keep in touch with them over your, and their, entire career.

How to give a good email introduction

Email introductions are something that you will do many times if following the principles in this book. There are good and bad ways to do this, so I think it is appropriate to cover some basics.

Here is an example of a bad email introduction I received:

Jay,

I'd like to introduce you to a good friend of mine, John Doe. John is a very experienced executive in the capital markets, mortgage and securities industry. I felt it would be wise for the two of you to meet and know each other.

I leave further introductions and communications up to the two of you. Good luck and let me know if there is more I can do to help.

*Warm regards,
David*

I should probably point out why I consider this a bad introduction:

- No Context - I wasn't looking for a mortgage or an investment at the time, so I'm not sure what the context of the introduction is? Why did you want me to meet with him other than you thought it was 'wise', or are you leaving that up to me to figure out...?
- No Contact Information - You didn't provide any contact information for me to call him, or him to call me. I'm not even sure what company he works for, or if he even knows what I do.

Here is a better example of how to do a good email introduction, and the format I use personally:

John,

I want to use this email to introduce you to Matt Goodguy. Matt was the founder of Awesome Electronics, and when he sold that to BigCo, he started a venture capital firm, Investments-R-Us. They are looking at a potential investment that is right up your ally, an organic chicken farm.

Matt – John Doe was the founder and CEO of Great Chicken, Inc., which he sold to Tysun Foods. He knows the space well and will be a valuable resource for you as you perform due diligence on your investment.

Here is your contact information:

Matt Goodguy

C: 555-689-0390

Matt@goodguy.com

John Doe

C: 555-234-5242

John.doe@email.com

Best,

Jay Allen

How to schedule a meeting

During the course of your efforts to access CxO level executives, you will need to schedule meetings either directly with them, or between them and someone else. In doing this with influential leaders on a daily basis for over a decade, I have discovered what works and what doesn't. Here are some tips on what to avoid and how best to accomplish the task.

The most common mistake that people make is to be too available and let the executive decide when they will meet. They might say something like, *'Just let me know what works for you and I will accommodate.'* On the surface it may feel like you are doing the executive a favor, but what you have really said to the executive is, *'My time is not as valuable as your time, so we are probably not peers. I'll also let you do all the heavy lifting figuring out when and where we should meet'*. When I get an email like this, I put it in my 'this will take more than just a second to figure out and respond, so I will try to get to it later' email folder. Delays in responding will be the norm for these requests.

You also don't want to go to the other extreme by saying, *'Here is a list of eight very specific time frames I can accommodate. Tell me which one works for you.'* In that case, I will probably have to print out your list and go through each one on my calendar to figure out which is best. Again, it will be a time consuming process that will delay a response.

Here is what I recommend, and what has worked well for me over the years. It incorporates three very basic aspects:

1. Provide two blocks of time when you are available, so they know generally when you are open
2. Suggest one very specific time during one of those blocks as a 'recommended time' to call/meet
3. Suggest a location to meet or phone number you will use

Here is what that might look like

Chris, I look forward to talking with you about how we can pool our efforts to continue to promote growth in the state. My contact information is below. Perhaps we can set up a time for a quick call early next week. I am wide open Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning. How about Monday at 3:00pm for our call? I will plan to call your office number if that works best.

This does several things to help achieve success while minimizing the number of emails required, and the work that the executive will have to do on his/her part. The executive will first look at Monday at 3:00pm – and if it works, he/she can just say ‘yes’. If it doesn’t work, he/she knows you are also open Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning and can make another recommendation. The executive has also been informed of which phone number you will call and can accept or suggest another.

The View from the Executive’s Side of the Table

The focus of this book has been about how those trying to access influential executives can do so in a non-confrontational, relationship building way; But what about the executive on their own? What if they aren’t contacted by you to help them identify and meet the people they need to meet? They know that building key relationships with peers and other influencers is important. How do they execute the build, manage and leverage strategies for themselves?

I was approached by the new President of a global company who needed help with relationship building for their executive team. As a global enterprise, they had built a team to maximize domestic and international sales, but realized they had largely ignored the business opportunities and relationships in their own backyard (locally and regionally). Ironically, they had been based in the same city for 80 years and were known, beloved and involved locally until they were acquired by an international firm 20 years ago. Today, when local executives of other major companies were given this company’s name, most had never heard of them. They didn’t even appear in the local Business Journal’s list of major companies within the state (even though they exceeded \$1bil in annual revenue).

Now this is an extreme case of ‘*executive hibernation*’; when executives are so focused internally that they lose, or fail to create an external network of peers and other influential leaders in their community and region. Creating a system for building, managing and leveraging influential relationships applies to influential executives just as much as it applies to the salesperson trying to access them. Whether someone like you steps up to help them (as I recommend in this book), or they do it on their own, it needs to be done. Most executives realize they have neglected this aspect of their personal development when they become unemployed and realize that they have no substantive personal network to lean on in their quest for employment.

Paradoxically, an executive’s ability to build their own personal network of other influential relationships is strongest when they are peaking in their influence and impact at their current employer. But that is also when they least need it, and have the least time to devote to the process.

Strategies for executives to build their own networking processes will be addressed in a future edition.

Conclusion

Not everyone needs the advice given in this book. The quest for influential relationships is only important to a small percentage of the population. And only a small percentage of those will ever build true expertise around building, managing and leveraging those relationships. In the end, that is probably a good thing, because it makes the opportunity that much greater for those who will.

We talked about 'fear' being one of the great inhibitors to success. There is another one – a 'lack of focus'. I am a believer that success is more often a function of focused attention than it is of intelligence.

I listen, on occasion, to books on tape while I commute. I once listened to a book by Mark Sanborn called *High Impact Leadership*. There was a story he shared that had a significant impact on my thinking in this area. It goes something like this...

A man goes into Hardware store and buys a bird feeder for his yard. He spends most of the next day assembling it and putting it up.

The next day he looked out the window and saw squirrels swinging from his bird house, eating the bird food and scaring away the birds. This was going to be an issue, so he went out and greased the post thinking that would solve the problem.

The next day, to his surprise, the squirrels were back - swinging from the bird feeder, eating the bird food and scaring away the birds.

He returned to the hardware store and asked for a 'squirrel-proof' birdfeeder. The store owner smiled and gave him what he asked for, which he promptly assembled and put up in his yard.

The next day he looked out the window, and to his astonishment, there were squirrels swinging from his bird house, eating the bird food and scaring away the birds. Now he was furious.

He boxed the bird feeder up and returned to the hardware store asking for the owner. He complained to the owner that the bird feeder was not 'squirrel-proof' as promised on the box.

The owner chuckled and said that he could have told him that, had he asked. He calmly stated that there was 'no such thing as a squirrel-proof bird feeder'.

The man was taken aback by this remark. 'You mean that we're smart enough to find a way to get to the moon, but we can't build a squirrel-proof birdfeeder?'

'Well', said the store owner, 'It's not a matter of brilliance, it's a matter of focus. How much time have you spent on average each day on solving the problem of squirrel prevention?'

'Probably less than an hour,' replied the man.

The store owner then asked, 'And how much time have the squirrels spent each day on trying to find a way to get to your birdseed? Every waking squirrel second.'

What is the moral of this story? Success does not respect intelligence nearly as much as it respects focused attention. Focused attention and effort will beat brilliance every time.

I don't know about you, but this was good news for me! I can't claim brilliance, but I can claim focus and effort. And it is clear that, what you spend your time doing is what you will accomplish – it's a simple matter of FOCUS.