

The First Pillar of Profitable Networking



Perspective

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

The Power of Building a Profitable Network

HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT if you were more connected? What would change? Would you make partner? Have more customers? Secure venture funding? Get a better job? If you're reading this book, there must be something must be something that you're looking for over and above what you have today.

When I started my networking journey, I didn't know what I wanted to accomplish. I just knew I wanted a better life. I longed for purpose and was tired of barely making ends meet while living in the perpetual home-to-work rut. Instinctively I knew that if I wanted more, I had to get connected. At the time I didn't know what that required, but I was determined to learn the ropes. Really, I asked myself, how hard could it be to get connected? Apparently quite difficult if you don't know what you're doing.

Thankfully perseverance, hard work, and guidance from the right mentors meant I was able to go from basically unconnected to connected in a short time, creating a successful career in media, politics, business, and the charitable sector. None of it would have been possible without the influence of my newly formed network. There's no doubt that I had some talent and ability that helped me at each step in my career—just as I assume you do too. But having talent and ability doesn't matter if the right people don't know about them.

In order for people to choose you over your competition, you need to be on their radar. That's why networking is so powerful. When done correctly, it gets you on the radar of the right people. I'm living proof that anything you

want to accomplish can be done by surrounding yourself with the right people and creating genuine connections with them.

While it won't happen overnight, with consistent and persistent effort it will happen. It's impossible to be a truly talented networker and be unsuccessful. At least, after interacting and connecting with thousands of people, I haven't seen that combination yet. Think about it: nothing happens without people making it happen. The more people a person is positively connected to, the more opportunities he or she will have. The law of averages means that getting connected will put you in an advantageous position both personally and professionally. Looking back, every exciting and challenging twist in my career was instigated by a connection with another professional. Most likely, when you look back on your life you will find the same to be true.

In their book, *The Middle-Class Millionaire*, authors Russ Alan Prince and Lewis Schiff studied the behaviors and characteristics that separate the regular middle class from those who elevated themselves to achieve millionaire status. Their research identified four key elements that define the middle-class millionaire: hard work, financial savvy, persistence, and networking.¹

In addition to being a fascinating read, this book underscored for me the importance of networking and its impact on the average person's ability to achieve optimal success. If your goal is to become a millionaire, then according to their in-depth research, mastering the art of networking is one of four proficiencies that can make that dream a reality.

Here's the catch: there are several different ways to network and some are more effective than others. The approach you choose has to match your personality, your circumstances, and your desired outcomes. Cookie-cutter attempts at networking can leave you frustrated. For example, a business-networking group can be the source of endless referrals for one member and yet be an energy sucker for another. In the same way, a conversation starter can work for one person but bomb for another. These nuances must be recognized and embraced to create an optimal network.

The most powerful—and ultimately the most profitable—network is one that is genuinely aligned with your personality and is sustainable over the long term.

The most profitable network is one that is genuinely aligned with your personality.

¹Russ Alan Prince and Lewis Schiff, *Middle-Class Millionaire: The Rise of the New Rich and How They Are Changing America*. (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

Another catch is that there are several different ways to define a network. This book is not about collecting business cards and simply adding names to your database. You could have 10,000 names in your address book, but if you're not genuinely connected with those people and they don't know who you are, and vice versa, what's the point? There is a time and a place to have a massive list of names so you can send one-way communication from you or your company. That list shouldn't be confused with your active network that consists of mutually beneficial business relationships.

Online networking can also confuse the issue. It is an extremely important element of networking. Without a comprehensive online strategy, you are very likely missing networking opportunities. However, just as networking is one element of your overall business development strategy, online networking is only one element of your overall profitable networking strategy.

Regardless of your personality, your desired outcomes, or your current circumstances, profitable networking requires consideration in four different areas: Perspective, Personal Brand, Procedures, and Strategic Plan. As such, this book is divided into the Four Pillars of Profitable Networking. Each section builds on the previous one, so by the end of the book you will have all the tools necessary to develop your ultimate network. Just keep repeating the process and doing more of the right activities until you start reaping the rewards.

FIRST PILLAR: PERSPECTIVE

In this section, you will learn how to shape your perspective on business networking by defining what it is and what it is not. It will help you solidify your overall goals and objectives, outline realistic expectations, and identify common mistakes that can keep you from truly connecting with others and getting results.

SECOND PILLAR: PERSONAL BRAND

This is where we'll address and develop the Business of YOU to ensure you are attracting new business relationships by conveying the genuine, welcoming, professional image that is essential to your success.

THIRD PILLAR: PROCEDURES

Procedures are the everyday networking elements that we're just expected to know, but are rarely taught. Mastering the fundamentals will give you confidence and add an extra notch of professionalism to your image. When used

correctly and effectively, these basics can be your most valuable assets as you build your profitable network.

FOURTH PILLAR: STRATEGIC PLAN

Once you're clear on your desired outcomes and have a solid perspective, are ready to share the Business of YOU, and have mastered the procedures, a strategic plan will help you decide the best places to go and how to create systems to turn your casual contacts into long-term, mutually beneficial business relationships. We'll also determine how online networking fits. Your strategic considerations are what will make your profitable network a reality!

Networking is the foundation for your success. Alone, it won't be enough to get you the results you want in business or for your career, but networking makes success easier and more probable.

You'll still need to make sales calls, but networking keeps you from making cold calls. You'll still need to run a solid marketing campaign, but networking makes it easier to get noticed. You'll still have challenges, but networking makes it easier to find solutions. You'll still have to submit your résumé, but networking gets yours to the top of the pile. You'll still have to deliver top-notch work, but networking gets more people to take notice.

Building a strong network is not rocket science. It's simply connecting with the right people and letting people connect with you. Once you've figured out how to connect with the world's greatest resource—people—you'll start to see the world's population as one big exercise of connect the dots. The possibilities for your future are infinite!