

1

The Missing Ingredient

We're going to tell you about 26 irrefutable laws that will help you build power relationships. These are professional and personal relationships characterized by trust, loyalty, respect, and generosity. They enable you to thrive in your career and give you deep personal fulfillment.

Our power laws apply without exception. They pass the tests of experience and common sense. You ignore them at your own peril.

We developed these laws based on extensive research. We have conducted thousands of interviews with senior executives and other personal contacts about the ingredients of enduring professional relationships. We've held endless conversations with high-achieving individuals in business and in the nonprofit sector. The laws we describe in these chapters

2

Power Relationships

have been percolating through the more than 25 books that we've written over the last 30 years.

These laws will enable you to engage with others in a way you never thought possible. Create lasting friendships. Win at work and in your profession. Connect as never before.

Study the laws. Leverage them. Follow them. You'll get powerful results.

Let us introduce you to the First Relationship Law. The story is about our friend Bill Jenkins. One day he got a wake-up call that changed his life.

Bill is a partner at a prestigious professional firm. He's bright and personable and holds two science degrees from top universities. In the past, he had so-so relationships with his clients. Mostly mediocre, he tells us. But something changed.

Within two years Bill rose to become one of the top rainmakers in his organization. He accomplished this transformation because he dropped his old beliefs about how to connect with his clients. He began following a new set of *relationship laws*.

"I had a client in New York," Bill explains to us. "He was the regional CEO for a large multinational corporation. I would see him about three times a year. One day, when I'm leaving his office, his executive assistant, Deborah, pulls me aside. I've got my briefcase in one hand and a large Power-Point presentation in the other.

"'You know,' Deborah begins, 'My boss really enjoys having a conversation with you. You ought to come more often.'

"'Well, I'm delighted he enjoys our meetings,' I tell Deborah. 'I do come fairly regularly. And we really prepare for these sessions.' I nod towards the thick presentation deck I brought with me.

The Missing Ingredient

3

“Deborah looks around, to see if anyone else might be listening. ‘Your competitors are coming more often,’ she says, now in a lowered voice.

“‘Thanks for that information,’ I tell her. ‘But I do feel like we have a good relationship. And I bring him lots of first-class analysis.’ I shake the slide presentation one more time to draw her attention to it.

“She now leans toward me, whispering. I feel like she’s about to share an enormous secret. ‘I must tell you, my boss has confessed to me that he views those PowerPoint slides as the price he has to pay to have a *good conversation* with you!’

“At this point, I am stunned. I start thinking about all those slides I’ve dragged into my client’s office!”

“What happened next?” we ask Bill.

“I reflect long and hard about this encounter. And I begin to change how I interact with the CEO and his other executives. I start seeing him more often. Our meetings are more casual and personal—sometimes over lunch, occasionally for coffee in the early morning.

“I start learning much more about his agenda, including his personal goals and ambitions. Because I’m seeing him more often, I’m in the flow of his daily life and can add more value to his day-to-day challenges.

“I still prepare for our conversations, but I don’t often bring the PowerPoint slides. I start offering more ideas about his overall business challenges and growth opportunities.

“And as I learn about additional issues his company faces, I’m able to introduce other colleagues and expand our work. The CEO begins to see my firm and me as contributing to his company’s growth strategy, not just as a spare set of hands to do operational analyses. Our discussions become more wide-ranging. We both seem to find our time together more enjoyable.

4

Power Relationships

“Within two years,” Bill tells us, “this becomes one of the largest revenue-producing clients at my firm. And I never go back to my old style that was all facts and figures. Never. Facts and figures might be an important part of your work, but they don’t take you to the highest level of relationship building.”

“What was your biggest insight?” we ask him.

“This is what I realized that day: *You build strong relationships through great conversations, not one person showing the other how much they know.* Some of my beliefs about what my clients valued had been wrong.”

Bill’s experience reinforced something we’ve observed for many years. The underlying assumptions you have about what leads to a good relationship make a huge difference in your behavior. And some of your assumptions may be the wrong ones.

Follow the right laws, however, and you build a vital network. You develop deep connections with clients, colleagues, influencers, family, and friends. You create an abundance of *power relationships*. Bill Jenkins did, and so can you.

Bill gives us the First Law of Relationships for this book: *Power relationships are based on great conversations, not one person showing the other how much they know.*

How to Put the First Law into Practice

“Power relationships are based on great conversations, not one person showing the other how much they know.”

Restrain your urge to impress others. Improve your conversations and you’ll grow your relationships. Use these five strategies:

1. *Evaluate your current conversations.* How many of them meet the criteria for being great? For example, do your conversations help you and the other person:
 - Reflect and sharpen your views?
 - Improve your understanding of a problem or challenge?
 - Learn more about each other?
 - Feel moved or fulfilled?
 - Leave the discussion energized and wanting more?
2. *Stop presenting or pitching to others.* Turn every presentation—be it to a client prospect or to your boss—into a true give and take. Pause every four or five minutes to ask questions, probe for understanding, and create dialogue.
3. *Start actually listening and responding.* Other people know you’re listening when you ask thoughtful questions about what they just said. When you synthesize and affirm. When you share relevant examples. When you empathize.
4. *Bring passion and emotion into your conversations, not just facts and analysis.* Ask, “How did you feel about that?” as well as “What did you think?”
5. *Make sure you’re talking about the right things.* Don’t be afraid to ask someone, “From your perspective, what’s the most important issue we should be talking about right now?”

