

Networking: Creating a group of acquaintances and associates and keeping it active through regular communication for mutual benefit. Networking is based on the question “How can I help?” and not with “What can I get?”

Source: *businessdictionary.com*

Much has been written about the importance of networking. As executive search consultants, networking is a significant part of our business. We begin each assignment by tapping in to our database of contacts within a given industry, geography and/or job function. Each conversation we have is an exchange of information: we share our client’s opportunity and, in return, we gain key market knowledge and/or introductions to potential candidates. Each search expands our contact and knowledge base, leaving us better positioned for the next assignment

Networking is an important practice for any individual, in any profession. Research has shown that networking has been instrumental in the success of key business, political and social leaders since the beginning of time. As an example, author Brian Uzzi points out in an HBS article that, years ago, Bill Gates’ mother sat on a United Way board with an IBM executive who was leading his company into the desktop business. She spoke with him about the underappreciated small companies competing against the large ones that IBM always chose as partners. Was it a coincidence that, shortly after that conversation, IBM took proposals from several small companies and Microsoft won the DOS contract? Up until that contract, Microsoft was not a well-known name.

For some, networking comes naturally and is a daily practice. For others, it can be a source of anxiety. Here are several tips to consider when establishing effective networks:

- **Find a mentor who does it well.** Observe your mentor in a variety of business and social scenarios and take notes on how he/she communicates with others;
- **Use your personal interests to expand your networks.** Find people who share your hobbies, interests and activities. Become involved in sports teams, spiritual groups, community service endeavors and political organizations. Shared activities bring together a diverse group of people around a common interest.
- **Give and take at every opportunity.** Share your thoughts, ideas and suggestions with others in your network. Establish yourself as a resource for others.
- **Become a relationship broker.** Make introductions whenever possible and help others expand their networks. Chances are, the favor will be returned.
- **Get the most out of each interaction.** Ask questions and learn as much as possible from each new contact. Know what you are looking for and be prepared to articulate how others can help you.
- **Use technology in the networking process.** On-line websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and numerous special interest and alumni sites help people connect. Don’t hesitate to contact others who share your specialties and interests.

We are thankful that you are part of our network. For further reading on the art of networking:

Competent Jerks, Lovable Fools, and the Formation of Social Network, By Tiziana Casciaro & Miguel Sousa Lobo. *Harvard Business Review*, June 2005, Product No. 1118.

How to Build Your Network, By Brian Uzzi & Shannon Dunlap. *Harvard Business Review*, December 2005, Product No. R0512B.