

# Crack the Networking Code

*Progress agents build business relationships.*



by Dean Lindsay

THERE IS THIS UNASSUMING little word you often find in the biographies of famous people. The word is *met*: William R. Hewlett *met* David Packard. Dean Martin *met* Jerry Lewis. Sid *met* Nancy. Siegfried *met* Roy.

We meet people all the time. Meeting people is part of life. Meeting people is one of the steps to building priceless relationships. But it is not the only step. There is a big difference between meeting someone and building a priceless business relationship with them. It's a long way from *met* to *net*, and because people misjudge this distance, the term *networking* has gotten a bum rap.

I ask professionals to share with me what they think of when they hear the word *networking*. Far too often they say it conjures up images of manipulative, self-serving, insincere, and predatory individuals who are on the prowl for someone they can pounce on, try to sell something to, or solicit an unearned favor from.

This style of networking is a waste of time. True networking is not about arm-twisting. It is not about trying to get someone to do something that does not make sense for them to do. It is not about scary old backslapping sales shenanigans.

Why try to build priceless relationships through networking? Because, largely, who you associate with determines who you become in life. The most successful, well-rounded, and happy people are most often the ones who are best connected to other successful, well-rounded, and happy people. When these people need something, they know whom to call.

How well-connected you are determines your access to those with the most money, the best contacts, the real power and influence, and the best seats at events. Being connected to the right people opens up opportunities.

If you are hoping to win new business, deep down you already know that you need to get out there and connect with people. Sure, in a perfect world your track record and past successes would speak for themselves, but without professional and personal

contacts, your spiffy proposal is likely just going to be ignored.

## Become a Progress Agent

To build great relationships, you need to help others progress. Everyone connects with others with the goal of progressing in some way. Everything we do is because we believe the perceived consequences of those actions will bring us the six Ps of progress: *pleasure, peace of mind, profit, prestige, pain avoidance, and power.*

This goes for eating, shopping, exercising, hugging, crying, working, going to the movies—whatever. Each of us makes decisions as to what to read, whom to talk to, what to buy,



where to eat, what to eat, whom to take phone calls from, and whom to help, based on whether we think these acts will bring us the six Ps.

At each moment, we make decisions based on what we think will bring these benefits—short-term or long-term. We think to ourselves, “Is taking this action (for example, talking with this person) helping me move toward pleasure, peace of mind, profit, prestige, power, or helping me to avoid pain? Will this action help me progress, or simply change?”

The people we meet must view being around us as progress, not change. It is natural to resist change, but we embrace progress. Building a relationship with us must be viewed as progress if we hope others will choose to alter their lives to include us.

Think of networking as a creative process: You are creating ways to serve and to help people progress. To build priceless business relationships and become a truly effective networker, you constantly need to search out

ways to help others progress. You must position yourself in their minds as a catalyst in their progress, as an agent in their progress, as a *progress agent*.

## Four Steps of the Code

CODE represents the four steps taken by effective networkers to build priceless business relationships and become progress-effective networkers:

### 1. Create personal curb appeal.

Effective networkers feel successful and display a genuine desire to help others progress. They are progress agents. They look and act the part of someone you would want to have in your corner. They don't go to networking events looking for success; they take success with them to the events.

### 2. Open face-to-face relationships.

Effective networkers connect with new people everywhere they go. They also research the various networking event options and commit to a networking strategy. They proactively open relationships. Be aware that it's possible to go to a networking event and not have any “networking moments.” It is not just about showering and showing up. It's about connecting with people and finding ways to help them progress.

### 3. Deliver solid first impressions.

Effective networkers know their first impression sets up future impressions, and they make sure it's progress-based. Effective networkers stand out in a positive way in the minds of people with whom they want future contact. Effective networkers focus on being *interested*, rather than *interesting*. They turn people on to them by tuning in to others.

4. Earn trust. My definition of trust is the *promise of progress*. Effective networkers follow up and keep in touch. They stay involved with the people they meet and earn their trust through a series of progress-based impressions. They find ways to help—to “be progress” for those in their network.

Sure, being in business is challenging; sales can be tough to come by; marketing is a moving bull's-eye; people are often pressed for time. But people do business with, share information with, brainstorm with, offer help, and give referrals to people they trust and value. They trust and value people who genuinely care about them, provide progress for their lives, and offer the promise of progress. Be progress! SSE

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**ACTION:** Become an agent of progress.