

# THE ART OF NETWORKING INSIDE YOUR COMPANY

## How to build camaraderie, co-operation and a cohesive team

By Liz Goodgold

**W**hen we hear the term “networking,” most of us think about meeting folks outside of our company. However, the true power of networking resides with making a connection inside of your company.

### Three benefits of networking within your company

After all, you spend more time working with people inside your company than out. It's these connections that build camaraderie, co-operation and a cohesive team. In essence, internal networking is your secret weapon to:

- 1. Forge Deeper Connections** – Similar to the old adage, the more you share, the more you care. Without a common bond, you'll never meet your next mentor, friend or champion.
- 2. Understand Your Industry and Company Better** – Tapping into the brilliance of your colleagues is an informal way to gain essential knowledge. Ask your colleagues

how they're tackling a particular issue; question how they're seeing the industry transform; uncover successful solutions facing your team. The bottom line: information is career currency.

- 3. Discover Opportunities for Advancement** – Co-ordinating with someone and partnering on a project allows your expertise to shine. Of course, it also sets you up for the next advancement or promotion.

### The deadly sins of networking

Even if you don't know exactly what to do to facilitate a conversation and connection, ensure you avoid these deadly sins:

- 1. Screening Yourself with Screens** – Your phone, laptop and tablet are the enemy. Entering a meeting room or job site and immediately delving into your technology broadcasts that you are unavailable for conversation.
- 2. Replying with “Busy, Busy”** – Your answer to, “How's it going?” could

end with a sure-fire conversation stopper. Instead, reply with specifics of a project under construction.

- 3. Talking Politics** – Regardless of your favourite political candidate, someone is ready to disagree with you. The advice: bite your tongue. Switch the conversation quickly to a non-controversial one.

### Give 'em something to talk about

Networking is simply having a conversation and then culturing a relationship; it's a mutually beneficial relationship where you share industry trends, concerns, solutions and relevant personal information. The old adage about not mixing business with pleasure is wrong. If you don't share anything, you don't learn anything! Further, how do you convert a conversation into a connection if you have nothing to say?

A landmark University of Chicago study concluded that people who “talk to strangers” felt a greater sense of self and well-being than those

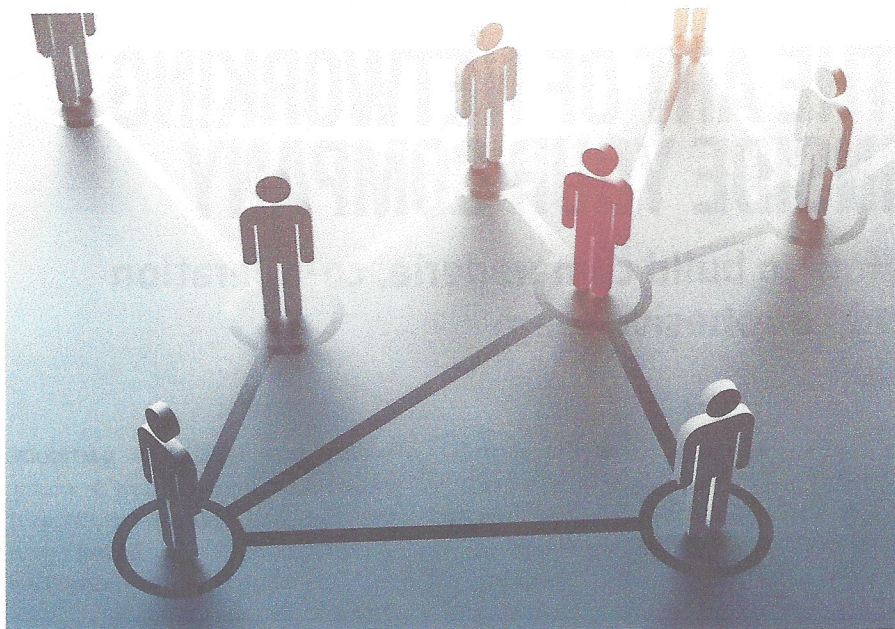


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who remained silent. However, the number one fear in talking to others was what to say. Networking should be logical and *sensible*, here are sensible recommendations to fire start a conversation:

1. **Sports** – Go ahead and ask about the Oilers, Blue Jays or Raptors. Sports brings out the passion in a fan and gives you a continuous stream of content.
2. **Entertainment** – What is the latest with the Kardashians? What shows are you bingeing? Understanding someone's tastes allows you to compare notes and make recommendations.
3. **News** – The IPO of We Work crashed and burned; what do you think? Juul is laying off 500 employees; is vaping a big deal in your world? As long as you avoid politics, abortion and religion, get ready for great conversation.
4. **State/Province** – Letting someone talk about where they grew up is golden. No need to limit it to birthplace, talk about landmarks you visited, which ones you missed and where your kids or parents are residing.
5. **Industry** – How are you dealing with the labour shortage? Are you able to find masons? How has the

legalization of marijuana impacted your hiring? Here is the kernel that forges a career connection.

6. **Breezy Weather** – Yep, you can always talk about the weather, your commute in the snow and why drivers can't drive in the rain. It's an easy form of connection that works.
7. **Leisure Activities** – Do you play golf too? Are you in love with murder mysteries? Where's the best hamburger you ever had? What are your vacation plans?
8. **Events** – What conferences are you attending? Which ones delivered the most benefit? Are there any events you recommend? Why or why not?

#### **Don't forget the follow-up**

Follow-up is the best building block of a relationship. If you simply have one conversation, the connection remains at a dead end. However, if you share articles, recommend a particular book, suggest an industry event, email a PowerPoint, you are converting the connection into a relationship. Then you know that your networking is working. ☺

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