

THE SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING FROM THE MOST CONNECTED WOMEN

TEN SUCCESSFUL WOMEN SHARE HOW THEY'VE MASTERED THE ART OF MEANINGFUL NETWORKING.

BY VIVIAN GIANG

Until the age of 40, Judy Robinett thought she was shy. As a result, she'd go to corporate events and stand in a corner because she felt awkward around others. At some point in her career, the management consultant realized she wasn't getting anywhere by keeping her head down and working hard. She needed to make useful connections.

Today, the author of *How to Be a Power Connector* describes herself as a "raging extrovert."

Most people know 632 other people, says Robinett, yet we go to networking events thinking that there's only one person who can help us. The reality is, we don't know who everyone else knows. Our best bet is to have genuine, useful relationships with as many people as possible.

"It's fine to have friends, but quality relationships plus strategy should be your goal in business," she tells *Fast Company*. "If you can learn to be scrappy, you can get anywhere."

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The women who know how to "be scrappy" and cultivate their relationships are the ones getting things done. They know that having useful connections lead to rare opportunities. They know how to add value to their circles. They know how to contribute to their communities. Their secret? They don't network; they connect and as a result, they are the most powerful people in their industries. Last

month, *Marie Claire* honored some of these game-changing women during its New Guard luncheon. *Marie Claire* Editor-in-Chief Anne Fulenwider says the women were chosen for their creative contributions in the past year, but also because of their wide, valuable networks. Put quite simply, the wider your network, the more people you have lobbying for you, she says.

Below, some of the most connected women share how they make and maintain their relationships.

INVEST IN OTHER PEOPLE AND BE DIRECT

Britt Morgan-Saks, head of Artist Services at Spotify



For Morgan-Saks, there is an important distinction between being connected because you know many people or being connected because you invest in other people and have great relationships. "A truly connected person cares about bringing value to those around them," says Morgan-Saks. "I have strong relationships and a network of people who trust me and will go out on a limb for me ... as I would for them," she continues.

When connecting, Morgan-Saks suggests being direct, but never pushy, arrogant, or overly aggressive. Don't worry if you're the youngest person in the room with the least amount of professional experience. If you bring a unique perspective and speak up, you're a valuable asset.

"Perhaps it sounds a bit sentimental and a tad trite, but I truly have a passion for seeing good, talented people win," she says. "My immediate reaction to meeting a brilliant, creative, inspiring person is always, 'how can I help this person accomplish his or her goal? Who do I know that this person must meet?'"

ORGANIZE YOUR CONNECTIONS GEOGRAPHICALLY

Jess McIntosh, communications director at Emily's List

When McIntosh was in college, she told her mom she wanted to go into politics and was quickly put in touch with a family friend's son. Little did McIntosh know, the casual phone call was actually an informational interview and she was soon set up with a position writing copy for political candidates.

"My mom clearly knew about connections before I did," she says. "It takes a couple of years to realize everyone relies on connections. There are kids younger than me who will buy me a cup of coffee and follow up with me every six months. I admire that kind of dedication. And when positions open up, those are the kids I think about because their names are in my inbox."

When it comes to networking, McIntosh warns not to network for the sake of networking. If you go to an event and make two really good connections, it doesn't matter if the rest of the room saw you. She also suggests organizing your connections geographically in a Google doc so you know who to call up when you're traveling.

ALWAYS SAY 'THANK YOU'

Laura Lee, director of content partnerships for Google and YouTube

When Lee decided to make the leap from corporate finance to television production, she relied heavily on her network. According to the digital executive, saying "thank you" is really important when people help you.

"Everyone is really busy and if they spend time to talk to you, always thank them," she says. When she meets someone new, Lee focuses on the "fun challenge" in truly connecting with that person.

CONNECT WITH PEOPLE ON A HUMAN LEVEL

Nnena Ukuku, CEO of Black Founders

Ukuku's entire career has been built on connections. The lead for a job she received with a judge earlier in her career came from a woman she randomly met at a bar and "connected with on a heart level." When Ukuku started her law practice, her first big client was the founder of an incubator, who was introduced to her by a lawyer she had once offered advice. Ukuku's lawyer friend met her new client at a Halloween party.



EVEN IF A CONNECTION DOESN'T SEEM LIKE AN AMAZING ONE, ALWAYS FOLLOW UP.

When connecting with someone, Ukuku says she connects on a "person to person basis" and makes sure to have a "vested interest in them."

"Some of the biggest mistakes I've seen people make is that they come to networking events thinking they know who is going to help them so they only go to highest level people," she says. Even if a connection doesn't seem like an amazing one, Ukuku says to always follow up.

DON'T BURN BRIDGES AND KEEP YOUR EGO IN CHECK

Kelly Krause, publicist for SXSW Interactive

As a publicist, Krause understands the importance of connections and relationships. Even when you're not sure whether your paths will cross again, never burn bridges, she says, because you never know what will happen.

"Establishing these relationships have come full circle and continues to come full circle for me," says Krause. "It's just really important to kind of cherish every relationship you establish and person you meet."

Her secret to making useful connections is that she never turns down a meeting request. "The most common rule in the book that we were taught when we were young is to be nice to everyone and keep your ego in the back seat," she says. "I truly take every meeting ... I never go into a scenario thinking, 'how can this person help me?' It's just keeping the person in your back pocket so that you can call them any time. You just really never know when you're able to help somebody or when they're able to help you."



AVOID 'PATTERN RECOGNITION' AND FOLLOW 'THE PLATINUM RULE'

Natalia Oberti Noguera, founder and CEO of Pipeline Fellowship

When thinking of connections you can make for others, Oberti Noguera warns against "pattern recognition" introductions, which is where you're introducing people to one another simply because they're superficially similar. For example, don't make an introduction for a woman to another woman because they're both women. Instead, make the introduction because it's the most useful connection that you have in your network for that specific person.

Most people have heard of the "Golden Rule," which teaches us to treat others the way we want to be treated, but Oberti Noguera advises to follow the "Platinum Rule", which says to treat people the way they want to be treated. The Platinum Rule requires more effort because you have to go a step further to understand how someone would like to be treated. She says, "being entrepreneurial about how one connects is helpful because then one can adapt to each other."

She says it's important that you're clear about how you can help one another. "Sometimes it's helpful to ask, 'how can I be helpful?'" explains Oberti Noguera. "There's that saying, 'help me help you.'" To streamline introductions, Oberti Noguera recently created the connection messaging system Ask and Offer.

TREAT EVERYONE WITH RESPECT

Lorine Pendleton, director of business development at Dentons and angel investor



Pendleton has an impressive resume: She once brokered deals for Spike Lee and Stevie Wonder as an entertainment lawyer. She sits on the board of the National Black Programming Consortium, which finances African-American programming to air on PBS. She helped organize TEDxHarlem.

No matter how much she's accomplished, Pendleton knows the importance of being kind to everyone. "You need to be careful, as you go up in your career, of how you treat people," she says. "I will talk to our receptionist or the person who picks up our

trash ... it doesn't matter. It's really important to treat people with respect because you don't know where they are in the totem pole and people remember how you treat them."

Aside from kindness, Pendleton suggests sending articles during the follow up based on the conversation you had when meeting. "I'll say, 'I came across this great article ... can I pick your brain on this topic?' People are pretty receptive to that."

ASK QUESTIONS TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE

Toya Powell, founder of Bid Compliance Solutions and former vice-president of Operations for the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.

Powell believes that the "fortune is in the follow up," but most people don't do it simply because it takes intentional effort. In that follow up, Powell suggests asking the others how you can assist them. By asking questions, you continue the dialogue. During the conversation, listen to the challenges and identify opportunities to collaborate or provide solutions.

"I always say the fortune is in the follow-up because it takes time to get to know an individual," she says. "Receiving a business card, following up within 24 to 48 hours, and including a note with at least one to two value added points are key."

"Once you get a response, help that person network or make another connection," Powell suggests. "From that point, you can become a trusted point of contact and, hopefully, top of mind for future opportunities."

HAVE AN OPEN MIND AND LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE

Emily Weiss, CEO of Into the Gloss and Glossier

Weiss thinks that networking is "sort of a sleazy word." Instead, she believes you should enter these relationships wanting to learn about the other person and what they do.

"My attitude is to be interested in meeting people," she says. "In general, another word for networking is just being friendly." After all, you never what will come out of your meetings. Case in point is when Weiss met investors from Thrive Capital last summer while raising funds for Glossier's seed round. The company didn't invest in the seed round, but did introduce Weiss to her current COO and ended up leading Glossier's recent series A round, which raised \$8.4 million.

DON'T GET POSSESSIVE OVER YOUR NETWORK

Alexandra Ostrow, founder of WhyWhisper

When meeting new people, Ostrow prefers one-on-one meetings so that she can understand the other person and avoids becoming "just another business associate," she says. To accomplish this, Ostrow puts time into thinking about how she can make the relationship worthwhile for her new connection.

"Enthusiasm in connections is what really stands out," she says. "Take the time to know who everyone is and put people in touch with one another." Whatever you do, don't get possessive over your network. They're not yours to own and you benefit more by connecting and helping others.

