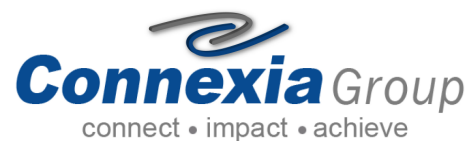


Building Valuable Connections Inside & Out

Boost your Performance to Astonishing Levels!

Patrick McClure

\$5.95





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Printed in the United States

Patrick T. McClure

2nd Printing 2007
1st Printing 2005

Published by:
Solutions Press

Forward

“Building Valuable Connections: Inside & Out” was written to meet the many demands from my clients and associates for more information on this important topic.

Four years ago, when I founded my own consulting & training company, I was primarily concerned with increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of sales organizations. There I was, happily doing GAP Analyses to determine what was wrong, and delivering recommendations for improvement. This would frequently be followed by a program of training & coaching.

My business expanded, and I was often asked to speak on topics such as selling and business networking. Since I was an avid member of Toastmaster’s International and the National Speaker’s Association, I would jump at the chance to speak to these audiences.

The demands for my services changed over time, partly as a result of my speaking requests. They evolved from expounding on sales techniques to topics such as Career Networking Strategies, and How to Influence from the Podium. The common thread uniting these topics was the underlying theme of ***Building Valuable Connections***.

Whether selling, presenting, or networking, the skilled professional seeks to build a series of trusted connections.

As I delved deeper into this subject, I began collecting my thoughts and putting them down on paper.

An additional twist was added when it was requested that my workshop be expanded to include the topic of internal communications and team building. Once again, the topic fit well under the umbrella heading of building connections of value, and a new theme was created.

What you read today in this simple booklet is a brief summary of my thoughts regarding how to become more efficient in establishing and growing our relationships with other individuals and groups. A large part of that proficiency rests on increasing one’s ability to connect, communicate, and to build value.

Success is largely determined by one’s ability to build lasting relationships with the people who most matter.

It is my hope that this work will set you on the path to greater connections, enhanced networking, and improved relationships.

To Your Success!

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Building Valuable Connections Inside & Out

No one achieves excellence on their own. Whether your business is developing a meaningful career, creating a loving family, coming up with an innovative idea, crafting a work of art, or developing a vast commercial empire, your success depends on others, and theirs depends on you.

Walt Disney had this to say: “You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful idea in the world, but it requires people to make the dream a reality.”

The father of Mickey Mouse, Disneyland, and the Epcot center knew what he was talking about. He was a creative genius with innovative ideas, tremendous energy, and the will to succeed. Yet, without others joining his cause, his best ideas would have died before ever becoming reality.

You may be experiencing the same thing. You have good ideas, great experience, valuable insights, and tremendous energy. You’ve taken the initiative and launched your own business. Now, with full confidence and optimism, you expect the world to beat a path to your door. And so you wait. And wait. And wait some more.

What you need to do is build a Team! You need to establish a network of valuable connections which work together to help each other out. You need to create an army of advocates that willingly take the initiative to recommend your company to whomever they meet. Likewise, they need YOU on their team to recommend their services.

Every person on the team can win the game, if they all work together for the common good. Every person can achieve their goals by helping each other.

The key to success in life and in the business world is to Build Valuable Connections!

There are two deceptively simple steps to get this done:

1. Build Connections
2. Create Value

It’s all about Building Connections and Creating Value.

To accelerate performance you must first make a connection.

On a personal level, we spend 90% of our lives alone, living in fear and loneliness. We simply assume that everyone else is “normal” and that we’re the only ones who have

these strange feelings of alienation. We know, deep down inside, that we don’t belong here and that we never will. Everyone else seems to be happier, more adjusted, more affluent, and more satisfied with the way things are going.

Perhaps Robert Heinlein was correct when he wrote his science-fiction classic “Stranger in a Strange Land.” His main character, Michael Valentine Smith, was raised by Martians and had somehow developed highly-evolved skills including mental telepathy. When meeting people from this planet for the first time, he noticed how lonely and unhappy they appeared to be. There was no bond, no connection between them. They were all strangers, even to each other.

These concepts are equally relevant to the business world. Getting connected and staying connected have never been more important. Companies spend millions of dollars annually in an attempt to “make a connection” with their consumers. Besides media & advertising exposure, you also have a plethora of technologically-enabled solutions such as websites, blogs, and Podcasts, and newsletters.

Of course, consumers and businesses have adopted defensive strategies to filter out the unwanted connections (spam) and to spot the desired communications with sophisticated electronic defense systems such as firewalls, “denied lists”, voicemail, and elaborate security systems to protect their resources and people.

The driving goal of most business communication is to create visibility (i.e. connection with) your potential consumers. Success in business demands that you get over the internal “loneliness” and self-centeredness, and focus your energy and messages outside, on your customers.

Your success in business, in your career, and in your life is dependant upon your ability to create value AND to established new connections. To build your personal team requires a deeper understanding and mastering the process of Building Valuable Connections.

Building Basics

First, some general comments on the topic of Building Connections.

As the title implies, connections don’t just happen, they are built. This requires taking action! If you wait for connections to happen, you’ll be waiting for a long time! You should take the time to create an Action Plan which has the objective of building the Right Connections you need to forward your purposes. You will also need to review every one of your current connections and classify them. Here are some sample categories:

- Friends and Family
- Associates
- Partners
- Prospects
- Qualified Prospects
- Customers & Clients
- Referral Sources

Super-Connectors

Who do you Connect With?

The short answer is “everyone important to my business.”

Harvey MacKay, one of the world’s best networking experts and author of “Dig your well before you’re thirsty,” explains some maxims about who you should be networking (connecting) with:

- 1) If everyone in your network is the same as you, it’s not a network, it’s an anthill.
- 2) Networking is not a numbers game. The idea is not to see how many people you can meet. The idea is to compile a list of people you can count on.
- 3) You can’t always be an expert. You can’t always know an expert. But you can always hire an expert.

Here are some other tips about who to connect with:

-- When you find someone that is well-connected, connect with them. If “everyone knows” Joe, so should you.

-- Ask around. If you’re new to a meeting or group, find out who is running the meeting and get introduced to them. Then you can tell them who you are and who you would like to meet.

-- Get introduced. When you make a valuable connection, have them introduce you to others in their personal network. And be sure to return the favor by introducing them to others in your network.

-- Plan in Advance. Try to find out who will be at the event beforehand. If you do your research, you’ll know who you REALLY want to meet.

Where do people connect?

Everywhere! Any time two or more people are meeting there is an opportunity to build a connection. After learning more about each other and their businesses, they will make decisions about whether this chance meeting has potential, and whether it should be expanded and changed into a more productive business connection.

There are dozens of locations where business people congregate, and you should make it your business to find and use all of them. Here’s a short list:

- Industry Associations
- Networking Groups (BNI, RBN etc)
- Company-wide meetings
- Clubs & Hobbyists

Churches
Volunteer Groups
Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions
Toastmasters International
Political Action Groups
Fundraising Groups & Events
Sporting Activities (golf, baseball)
Alumni Groups
Special Interest Groups
College & University Events
Social Events (Plays, Opera, Music)

Any time people congregate, there is an opportunity to “meet & greet” and to connect with people who may be important. Of course, this will also be their opportunity to meet and connect with you. Whenever building connections, remember to take the initiative and offer to give first. The best way to get a valuable connection started is to be the first to connect them with someone of value.

Since time is a critically scarce commodity, it is important to spend it with people who are the most relevant to your success. Therefore, you need a method of selecting who, from among the billions of people available, would you like to make connection with.

You can do this right now. Make a list of all of the people you would like to meet. This should include business leaders and others that would be most helpful to your career. Include companies that might be candidates for your products or services. Give it some careful thought, and come up with a complete list. When the list is done, you now have a high impact “target list”.

The next step is to find out who you know that might know someone on the list. Or who do you know that may know someone who.....? You get the idea. Now you know exactly who you are looking for and you have a better plan.

Besides the planned list, you should always be on the lookout for new potential connections. This normally occurs when you find yourself among a crowd of people, mostly strangers. How do you make the optimum connections then?

Here’s the best way to do this. When meeting someone new, find out their “sphere of influence.” Use the following Connecting Drill at group events:

BUILDING CONNECTIONS DRILL

1. Introduce Yourself
2. Ask Questions to find Centers of Influence
 - a. What does your Firm/Business/Company do?
 - b. What is your responsibility for your Firm?
 - c. Who do you sell to? Who are your Clients?
(remember to LISTEN)

If they are a good Prospect, then deliver your 30-second commercial, answer any questions and then arrange to follow up at a **later time**. Remember your objective is to meet as many decision makers or CI as possible and to spend 80% of your time with people you've never met before.

3. "I've enjoyed talking with you. May I have your card? I'll call tomorrow and see if we can meet to discuss this further. I look forward to seeing you again....."

4. If they aren't a prospect, then MOVE on.

"I've enjoyed meeting with you....."

Follow Up! If you've spent the time to meet and greet new people, and have sorted out the ones you want to build a relationship with, follow up! Enter the information into your contact database and follow up within 2 days with a phone call or an email at a minimum.

Set up a coffee meeting or luncheon. Do it within two days or the person may just forget who you are and why it's important to meet? This LAW should be cast in concrete and encased in gold. Follow up NOW!

When you do meet, this is when you have the chance to really establish your value and build the relationship. Remember, it needs to be a mutually beneficial relationship. Try to be the one who gives first! Find out what you can do to help the other person, and do it. Connect them with your other valuable connections whenever possible.

Your personal network of connections operates very similar to the World Wide Web. The linkages you build between and among your connections establish your value (ranking) in the search engines. The more you connect others with others, the more valuable you become. When you make a connection and help someone else, you have built good will among two people. Each of them will now be actively looking to promote you and your services to their circle of friends.

There is no more powerful connecting tool at your disposal than this. *Connecting others with others builds your value across the network and will enhance your worth by an exponential basis.*

Think about the “Godfather” series of movies. Don Corleone was the most important person in the entire movie because he was the “go to” person. He knew everyone of importance and he could get the job done. He actively looked out for his friends and he made sure they were introduced to each other. He sat at the nexus of all of these communication lines. He was the crossing point, and he created the connections!

The Inside Connection

This is called “Taking Care of Business.” Your established network (your rolodex) includes your current associates, friends, contacts, and partners. You already have built a Community of Contacts. Now it’s time to deliver VALUE to this existing network and take care of them like they’re family. Here’s how:

- Deliver Great Service
- Make them Special
- Get Testimonials
- Distribute Testimonials/Post them
- Give Referrals to
- Get Referrals from
- Expand your Database of Contacts
 - friends
 - clients
 - referral sources
 - Super Connectors

- Publish Newsletters & Blogs
- Special Website login for the “secret sauce”
- Affiliate Marketing --- Web
- Co-Branded Events (Seminars, Workshops)
- Co-Sponsor Events
- Remember their Important Dates
- Make it Personal
- Give away Valuable Reports/White Papers
- Special Offers
- Free attendance at your Events
- Rewards Programs
- Spiffs for Referrals
- Cultivate Referral Sources (parallel services)

When asked, consultants will tell you that 80-90% of their business comes from referrals, and it is vitally important to take care of these “inside” connections. So should you.

The Outside Connection

This is the extremely powerful business expansion system which most people call networking. I prefer calling it Creating New Business Connections by Building Value.

A network filled hastily with anyone and everyone has no value. Rushing through networking meetings and handing out your business card to anyone who breathes may feel like it's networking, but it has no value. Sending out email blasts or mailings to “the world” is a waste of time and money. Today's smart marketers prefer to TARGET their marketing. When building your personal/business network, you need to adopt the same principles. This means you target exactly who should be in your network, and then you find a way to build a connection to them. It is a precise activity, not haphazard.

Here are some of the best methods you can use to build external connections:

- Newsletter
- Networking Groups
- Industry Associations
- Speaking Opportunities
- Writing
- Prove your Expertise
- Positive Press
- Communicate Your Value
- Give Away Something
- “Who do you know who”
- Networking Meetings --- Strategies
- Research
- Target Market Analysis
- Target your Networking
- Be Helpful
- Target who you wish to Meet
- Find the Super Connectors—and connect

Working a Networking Event— Tips & Techniques

A networking event can be defined as anytime two or more people gather together with the purpose of exchanging ideas, information, or resources.

The key component is RESOURCES.

You are a resource to them. They are a resource to you. You are already exchanging information and ideas. Where it becomes most powerful is when you can now connect them with other resources in your network and vice-versa.

You want to become the Conductor...the person who is directing traffic. You are at the intersection and you are directing traffic from one point to another. Without you in the middle, these two other connecting points would never know about each other. You are the glue which attaches them. Therefore, you are in a position of power and influence.

The correct networking attitude is to ***Be a Resource, Not a Vendor.*** You need to approach the meeting with the resolve to help make everyone else in the meeting more successful. Your talent in connecting them with other people, resources, and ideas is the key to your personal success.

To make the most effective use of your time, you need to spend it with the people who are most important to your business.

There are three Kinds of People at a Networking Event:

1. Decision Makers
2. Centers of Influence to Decision Makers
3. All Others

Your key objective is to identify the Decision Makers or Centers of Influence and to minimize spending excessive amounts of time with anyone else.

Some more Suggestions for Effective Networking

1. Carry Business Cards at all Times
2. The purpose of Networking is to WIDEN your circle of Friends. Don't just hang out with people you already know.
3. Talk to Everyone. Whenever two people meet, it's a networking event.
4. Let the other person speak, and you LISTEN.
5. Be Helpful. Give first. "How can I help you" is MAGIC.
6. Be Memorable. Short and Sweet and Memorable.
7. Networking is NOT Sales, it's about developing relationships.

Building Value

How do you go about building value? Let's start with a definition.

“the worth of a thing in money or goods at a certain time”

“the quality of a thing which makes it be thought of as more desirable, useful, important”

Notice something? It's all relative to one person. Just like “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” so too is value. It is an intangible quality which is assigned by one person. It is all tied up in that person's perception of what is being evaluated.

If you line up 3 different cars and have people select which one they like, chances are they will pick differently. They will choose the car they like based upon their perception and their values. They will choose based upon their PERCEPTION of what is important, desirable, and useful at that moment. There is no absolute best choice; it is all based upon the values held by the individual.

How can you use this precept to your advantage as a consultant?

You are selling yourself and your ability to deliver a service. In order to do this, you must create a perception that you are an expert, that you can get results, that you are the

right person for the job. You are selling the VALUE of your service, not the service itself. And the person/company you are selling to is evaluating that value based upon their PERCEPTION of what is important, not what is actually important.

You are projecting an intangible value and it is being evaluated by an intangible perception. It's all pretty intangible. It can't really be measured, weighed, felt, tasted, or touched. It's intangible.

The Value Equation

However, there is one critical component that IS tangible. It can be seen, felt, measured, weighed and even smelled. That is your body.

If you've done any public speaking, you already know this startling fact: 80 % of the "message" that is delivered to an audience is delivered by the Body Motion (Body Language). And 60% of that BM comes from the face!

Your customer can easily see your body and your face. They can and will make dozens of decisions about you within seconds of first being introduced. The "first impression"

they receive after greeting you, shaking your hand, looking you in the eye and reviewing the rest of your body parts will create an indelible impression.

Like it or not, your client or prospect will make a preliminary decision within the first 40 seconds if they like you and if you can be trusted. That's why experts always emphasize making a good first impression in a business setting.

You can overcome an initially poor first impression, but you are fighting against the odds. Once made, a negative impression is hard to overcome.

So, the first rule of building value is to create a positive first impression. This requires that you project that you are professional, poised, confident, and friendly. The body language, your spoken word, the clothes you wear, the expression on your face, will all contribute to this image. You want your image to project in the most positive manner.

Of course, the intangibles are being communicated at the same time. We human beings project energy which is distinct from simply the body. The emotions we project create an "emotional impact" on other people. We rub off on other people quite easily.

The second part of selling yourself is to project the right energy, to use the correct emotion and to "broadcast" on the right wave length. This will contribute to the impression that you are poised.

What energy you choose to project is totally up to you, but you should make it appropriate to the situation. Most importantly, it should be under your full control, and not simply a reaction to what is occurring in the meeting.

The third part of the value equation is Confidence. This is accomplished by being prepared and ready for the meeting. This means action and research before the face-to-

face meeting. The only reason people display a lack of confidence is because they are not prepared and have not practiced enough. You should know as much as possible about the person in advance of the meeting, wherever this is practical. If you are entering a meeting, there should be an agenda and an objective. If you are reviewing a proposal, it should be clear and concise. There should be as few variables as possible.

Finally, and most importantly, is Delivery. You've made a good first impression, you've created the most optimal energy for the occasion, and you are prepared and ready for the encounter. You are now connected, primed, and ready to deliver your message – and it must be perceived as valuable to the other person.

Your client/prospect will make decisions based upon their PERCEPTION of reality based upon their own background and experience. Your job will be to break through this false image and connect with them in real time.

People in general are usually listening to the inside of their head (“the committee”). They are mostly concerned with themselves, and they have very little spare attention for you. Until you give them a compelling reason to listen to you, they will remain unfocused. Until you tap into the “WIFT” factor, you will not capture their full attention.

Your initial delivery, therefore, should be directed at them. It should be valuable to them, in their terms. It should be perceived as interesting, valuable, humorous, helpful, or educational in THEIR WORLD. In short, focus your attention on the other person and meeting their immediate needs. The easiest way to do this is to ask them simple questions and show them the courtesy of listening. People love to talk about themselves, and they are always looking for a good listener. If you are a good listener, you will be perceived in a positive light, and they will recognize you as a valuable connection and an important person. Once this initial rapport is established, upon a firm foundation of value, you will then have the basis to conduct mutually beneficial business.

To recap, selling yourself as a professional requires building value. To do this, you must master the tangibles and the intangibles. You build value by focusing on creating a positive first impression, projecting the right energy, by displaying confidence and by delivering messages that create rapport and establish the basis for doing business together.

Boosting Performance

To accomplish your life's goals, you need to recruit a team and inspire them into action. The positive energy which a network of professionals can generate is astonishing, because there is no limit to their accomplishments. Each teammate can recruit an entirely new group of connections, and they can recruit another group of connections, and so on and so on. Building Connections of Value leads to exponential growth!

Use these simple steps to Build Your Connections of Value.

To your Success!

*“A team can win with almost **any** offense, provided everyone on the team is playing the **same** offense.”*

-- John Wooden, legendary basketball coach at University of California, Los Angeles

Patrick McClure, president of Connexia Group, had the privilege and pleasure of meeting Coach Wooden while attending UCLA and has never forgotten many of the lessons learned about teamwork, responsibility and dedication.

Mr. McClure works with clients to help them Boost their Performance and Win more Business. He maximizes results in three areas:

- Sales skills – increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of your sales operation
- Presentation Skills –building effective presentations and delivering them with poise and confidence
- Networking skills – rapidly growing your network of valued business contacts to drive more business

He has personally sold over \$100 million in products and services for companies such as IBM, Digital Equipment, EDS and Hitachi Data Systems. His 25-year career in sales and management, training, and speaking has been marked by tremendous success at every level. Four years ago, he left corporate America and founded the Connexia Group.

Patrick is a member of the National Speaker’s Association (NSA), the Association for Professional Consultants (APC) and the American Society of Training & Development (ASTD). He is also a Partner in the Cerius Consulting Group. (www.ceriusgroup.com)

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