

Work Daze: Get out of my network

by *Bob_Goldman*

You're a wonderful person, kind reader, and I've really enjoyed our relationship, but if you are expecting any further attention from me, you'd better wise up. Starting today, you're off my radar and out of my life. I'd love to spend more time relating with you, but honestly, you're just no longer worthy of a place in my network.

If this seems harsh, let me recommend a few minutes of virtual networking with David Nour, the man who not only developed, but also trademarked the theory of "Relationship Economics." Nour has been described as a master networker, and if you think this is mere puffery, an article by Lori Davilla in "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution" reports that master Nour has a network of 2,018 people. He also boasts 240 humans in his "think tank," i.e., "deep subject matter experts who are great value to me," and more than 20 lucky individuals on his list of "2 a.m.'s," people he can call anytime to "help him solve problems."

Like the problems created by being called at 2 a.m. by a fellow you met over a bowl of cheese dip who now wants your help to solve his problems.

What I like best about the concept of Relationship Economics is the discipline it overlays onto the booming, blooming need to network. Instead of going off like a flibbertigibbet, promiscuously collecting business cards like a starving squirrel in a dish of cashews, Nour suggests a more focused approach.

"Don't network just to network," is No. 1 of his top 10 recommendations. "Have a purpose and provide value."

This strategy may seem harsh and rather devious, but as you scratch, claw and back stab your way to the top, certain old-fashioned concepts like friendship will have to be jettisoned. If you want a bunch of good-natured, like-minded cronies with whom to hang, join the Odd Fellows Lodge. If you want to get the executive suite, you have to build your network with people you can use.

This brings us to Nour's second recommendation: "Build a target list of people you want to meet." It doesn't matter if these people are not within the reach of your current network. You're going to leapfrog this bunch of losers as you scramble toward relationships with people who can do you some good.

"Think about who you need to get to know - your desired network," Nour counsels. "Then think about who I know today, how can I be an asset to them, and how can I web my current relationships to those who I want to get to know."

Let me give you a real-life example. Say, you want to meet Lindsay Lohan, the lovely, but troubled, party-girl movie star who, you're sure, would respond positively to the stability offered by a pudgy, middle-aged, middle-management doofus like yourself if she were only part of your network. That your warm and supportive nature would be an asset to Lindsey is obvious, so now you need only "web your current relationships" to get to her.

Once you have laid it all out, the impossible becomes easy. Simply divorce your present spouse, giving her all your worldly possessions. This should get you networked with a respected process server, who will track you down like a dog in your room over the bus station, and who went to school with Lindsay's Pilates teacher - who will get you addicted to crack cocaine, resulting in a court-ordered visit to a rehab facility - where you will be in the padded cell next to Lindsay, or Paris, or Brittany. And then, brother, let the networking begin.

(Female readers can substitute Mel Gibson, David Hasselhoff or Scooter Libby. The principle is the same.)

To seal your networking deals, Nour uses the apt, and trademarked, concept of "Relationship Currency." "Do something for three people every day," he advises. "You will then touch 63 people in 21 days. Talk about a bank account!"

I know you regularly touch people, but asking to borrow \$5 for your daily Starbucks Vente Persimmon Mocha Frappuccino is not exactly building your relationship bank account. The idea is to be of use to the people you want to use. For example, you might tell a close, networked friend in your company about a terrific new job opening at a competitor. Then double-down on your networking portfolio by telling the boss about the shocking disloyalty of your networked ex-friend.

An ethics professor might be horrified, but trust me, Lindsay will be proud of you.

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