

Networking: Repeat After Me

By Rod Colon

OK, so you know the basics of connections, relationships, networks, and networking. You need to be sure to observe the following guidelines in all of your networking endeavors:

- Never think about making connections because of what you believe others can do for you; approach it in terms of what you can do to support the goals of others.
- Never try to use networking as a means of asking for employment. Instead, use networking to ask for advice, guidance, or suggestions for what some “next steps” might be given your particular situation.
- If you are placed in the role of a connector (i.e., you will, at someone’s request, be asked to connect person “A” with person “B”), make sure you understand the requestor’s *value proposition*, i.e., what it is that they bring to the table for the benefit of the relationship. If you believe their value proposition is weak or inadequate, politely decline the request to make the connection on the grounds that you, as the connector, have the most to lose if the relationship doesn’t work out well.
- Get comfortable with small talk; you’ll need it to grease the wheels of first-time connections.
- Carefully manage the trusted networks you build. Treat each relationship as if it’s the most important link in your chain. Ping your network regularly.
- Follow up or fail. Soon you’ll be thinking of your career as a business owner (the CEO of ME, Inc.), and so this is now a “corporate responsibility”, not an idle task on a “to do” list.
- Build your network before you need it. Never become complacent; when you find yourself in transition, have the network already in place to help support you and guide you to your next position.
- Networking (as part of the business of managing your career) NEVER STOPS.