



How to become a people magnet

by Dave Mather

We all know business people who are smart, friendly and talented... and yet never rise to the top. In this series, we'll explore why this is so and how you can build a powerful personal network. After all, our business success depends largely on your ability not only to establish key relationships, but to gain the willing cooperation of others on whom you depend. Decide in advance what type of relationship you want to create, and operate from that perspective. In relationships, it takes two to say yes and one to say no. Focus on your commitment first, knowing that the other person is free to say no. How we begin a relationship and how we behave in it is an important factor in making it mutually beneficial.

We build relationships on three fundamental levels. In this article, we'll look at the first of these levels: Connecting.

Think of successful people you admire, ones who have a network they can call on. This type of connection doesn't just happen. When people walk down an airport terminal, they are indifferent to each other. They're not bad people; it's just that they have no genuine connection to each other.

The first step in any relationship is to create a foundation of mutual trust and respect. Contrary to popular belief, in less than seven minutes it's possible to connect to others at a level deeper than most people create in months, even years. The key is listening to connect with what the other person truly values.

Some people are pleasing to be around, others are not. We all know people who only seem to create connections to get something for themselves. Clubs are filled with people who take, but give little in return. Create your network by being the kind of person with whom others want to connect. If you are uninterested in helping others get what they want and are simply looking for techniques and tools to get what you want, then you may be disappointed.

Connecting Principle 1: Connect to others by name, keep criticism to yourself

We have a different relationship once we call each other by name. While most business people know this, few take it further than their good intentions. Others say they are unable to remember names and stop trying.

Day after day, we hear and see examples of people who do connect to others by name. Think of the last time you made a purchase using a credit card and the person called you by the name printed on your credit card! (No exceptional memory required). When you are greeted by a person wearing a name-tag, do you call them by name?

Dale Carnegie suggests that a person's name, to that person, is the sweetest and most important sound in any language. Begin your connection by separating each person from the masses by calling them by name.

It's important to begin a relationship on a positive note. Criticism puts others on the defensive, and usually makes them strive to justify themselves or argue. Some just shut down and distance themselves from the complainer. That said, many people fail to recognize how much complaining or criticizing they do. It's invisible to them.

A colleague of mine had a magazine editor ask him to critique another man's article before publishing it. The editor liked the critique so much he asked for permission to print it. My colleague declined. He did not want his first appearance in the magazine to be a criticism of some else's work.

Benjamin Franklin, tactless in his youth, but diplomatic and adroit at handling people later in his life said, "Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain – and most fools do."

Connecting Principle 2: Become a more appreciative person

Giving sincere appreciation is often misunderstood and mistakenly labelled as manipulative. We long for sincere praise and seldom get it. When we suggest people give specific, positive feedback in a meeting, there is often giggling and discomfort receiving feedback. This indicates that this kind of feedback is missing in our lives, especially in the workplace.

If I work for you and all I hear is criticism and negative feedback, I'll say to myself, "Nobody is that bad!" In contrast, if all I hear are positive things my reaction is, "Nobody's that good!" What people crave is sincere and constructive feedback. A good rule of thumb is to begin with praise and keep your critical feedback to yourself until you're connected at a level of trust and rapport.

Forget about a return on investment for your praise and feedback. Simply work on becoming a more appreciative person. Give sincere, specific compliments to everyone you meet. Get into the habit of doing this, and others will want to connect with you. Charles Schwab, the first person to receive a million dollar salary in the 1930s said, "There is nothing else that so kills the ambitions of a person as criticism from his superiors. I am anxious to praise and loath to find fault."

Before you dismiss this as ineffective with discerning, intelligent people, remember that flattery is from the teeth out. Sincere appreciation is from the heart out. If all we had to do was to use flattery, everybody would catch on to it and we would all be experts in human relations. Forget flattery. Instead, give honest, sincere appreciation as a way to become a more appreciative person.

Connecting Principle 3: Communicate your genuine interest in other people

This is more challenging than it seems. The operative word is genuine. One of our clients lost a \$1 million-a-year client. An employee took it upon himself to get this customer back even though others had tried and failed. He chose to re-connect with the customer, and push himself to listen for what was truly

important to them. Once this was clear, he asked for another chance and the customer agreed. Today, that account generates more than the revenue initially lost.

There are those who say, "We do this all the time, it's just common sense..." Ask yourself, how many people who provide you with goods and/or services actually act from this commitment? Do they pitch benefits before connecting to you as an individual and uncovering what your organization values? Do they listen for what's important to you and your organization before offering solutions? Do they seem genuinely interested, or just waiting for an opening to talk about themselves? This approach may seem like common sense, but it's far from common practice.

Connecting Principle 4: Listen for the other person's point of view

We learn what other's value when their lips are moving and they are telling us. Assumptions, speculation, and guesswork, does not give us access to another's viewpoint. In order to genuinely connect, it is critical to let the other person do a great deal of the talking.

Do most people follow this simple advice? (I'll let you decide). Dale Carnegie cites a study of 500 telephone conversations. What word was used 3,900 times in these calls? You guessed it, "I." "I." "I."

Connecting Principle 5: When you open your mouth, talk in terms of the other person's interest

We cannot do this if we have no idea what the other person truly values. Let them do most of the talking by asking questions and listening to connect with them at the level of what they value. Then, and only then, can you sincerely talk in terms of the other person's interest.

Hatch Mississauga, with more than 60 offices worldwide, provides support and project and construction management to the global mining, metallurgical, energy and infrastructure sectors. The leader of Hatch's Project Delivery Group, John Pearson, says, "Show me a dream project turned over to a project manager ineffective in dealing with people, and I'll show you a project that quickly deteriorates. In contrast, I've seen 'projects-from-hell' turned around by project managers skilled in the art of dealing with others."

These skills are not natural. It takes focus and effort to elevate them to the level of mastery. Research at the Carnegie Institute of Technology revealed that even in such technical careers as engineering, about 15 percent of one's financial success is due to one's technical knowledge and 85 percent is due to skill in human engineering and the ability to lead people.

The problem is that most professionals, even if they intellectually understand the benefits of what we suggest, often won't do the work it takes to build powerful connections. If you want to build a strong and deep personal network, concentrate less on what you want to get from relationships and focus on who you choose to become in them.

Quoted by Harvard Business Review, Peter Drucker said, "Discover where your intellectual arrogance is causing disabling ignorance and overcome it. First rate engineers, for instance, tend to take pride in not

knowing anything about people. Taking pride in such ignorance is self-defeating. Go to work on acquiring the skills and knowledge you need to fully realize your strengths.”