

# ExecutiveSuite

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## NETWORK TO WIN

Now more than ever, this is the time to take your networking skills to the next level.

By Karlin Sloan and Jackie Sloane


If you've ever worked in sales or are a natural extrovert, networking may come easily to you. But if you're on the quieter side, you may view it as a necessary evil—something to suffer through periodically.

We have good news for all of you, regardless of temperament: Networking happens all the time in your life, though you may not recognize it as such. It is also an incredibly powerful leadership tool. Becoming more conscious about the power of relationships and cultivating your networking expertise can have an enormous impact on your career and your life.

Mary, a seasoned networker who had just lost her second senior-level post in nine months, found a new role within 30 days. Vickie dramatically cut costs at her firm, and now she is sought after for key leadership roles in her company because she gets amazing results from her relationships and internal network. Martin, after being assigned an important

project that he dreaded, got kudos from his boss for his excellent work.

What these three individuals have in common is that they take the time to cultivate relationships. As a result, people are willing to act on their requests for assistance. Networking is about generating connection, goodwill and mutual benefits. It is not about selling anything or collecting business cards. The best networkers are authentic human beings—they take an interest in others and offer support, and once a rapport has been established, they make requests. Networking relationships are essentially business friendships.

Particularly in a volatile economy, organizations can change profoundly in a flash. In times like this, your ability to cultivate and leverage relationships has never been more important for your personal success and the success of your company. 

### THE SECRETS OF POWER NETWORKING

To be a more effective networker, try these basic strategies:

**Focus.** Who do you want to meet? Make it happen. Consider reaching out to that person by phone or email before or after an event: "Lydia, I have always admired your work for Acme [if that's true—and be sure to say something specific. Everyone likes being appreciated]. I would love to chat with you about [something you know she cares about]."

**Plan your introduction.** The best introductions provoke interest and questions. How do you contribute? One consultant introduces himself this way: "I'm Jon Jones. I help companies make sound business decisions." People often reply: "Really? How do you do that?"

**Develop a rapport first.** You don't have to say anything brilliant. Once a woman complimented one of the speakers on her scarf at an event, and it led to a business friendship. Learn about your contact. Be interested.

**Listen more than you talk.** Real listening is a gift. Ask questions to learn what your contact cares about. People become interested in you as a result of your interest in them.

**Give first.** Establish trust before you make a request.

**Relax.** Be yourself. You'll have more fun and make stronger connections.

For more networking tips and to share yours, visit [ExecutiveTravelMagazine.com](http://ExecutiveTravelMagazine.com)



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