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Thank you for adding richness to the texture of the stories in this new book.

FLOW: How to turn your stumbling blocks into stepping stones

Author: Brenda Eckstein

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In appreciation, we have attached a copy of one chapter, straight from the book.

BOOK 1 OF THE **F L A G S** BOOK OF IDEAS
FLOW LEAD ADVANCE GROW SERVE

20. PERSONAL NETWORKING: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

‘Personal networking as a Business Tool’ is the title of one of the workshops I have presented on a regular basis. This session emphasises the importance of building positive relationships which, in turn, help us to become the person of choice or the business of choice. While acknowledging the importance of social media, the focus of this workshop is on the benefits of building positive relationships in other ways.

Positive relationships also generate an ‘absence of malice’. When things go wrong, as they often do in our personal and business lives, within an existing positive relationship we are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt.



Participants at a personal networking session

Some of the ideas that have been generated by the participants at workshops on the benefits of personal networking are:

1. Personal networking is beneficial within groups and organisations and externally as well. We need to carefully identify where we play roles and who our stakeholders are. In other words, who do we serve? Which entities or people have power over our organisations or over us? The benefits of fostering those relationships are enormous.
2. Business expansion can be gained through personally engaging in a range of different activities. We thus interact with a wide range of people. For example, by playing cricket and getting to know the other cricket players and their supporters, opportunities for new avenues of communication through their networks may be recognised.
3. A greater connection between personal passions and building networks can benefit us in work situations. For example, where we have an interest or capability, by offering to serve on committees or boards, or taking other leadership roles, we become more visible, and are also in the know regarding developments or other information which could be helpful to us or to others, if appropriate to share.
4. If you grow yourself, you grow someone else. We are all part of many different systems. Within an organisation, if we improve our product, our service or the way we operate, we can more easily complete processes and enhance the overall performance, thus lifting standards for everyone. Quality conversations play an important part in this.
5. By having a finger on the pulse, we can notice issues and problems as they arise and thus solve them more quickly and easily.
6. By keeping track of people, and knowing about their new positions and developments, we can create opportunities for them, for ourselves and for others.
7. Willingness to help is reciprocal. If we have an attitude of 'what can I do for you?' others will be influenced by this. When we need help, others are more likely to notice and offer to help us.
8. When we are searching for new staff, if we have positive relationships with others, we are more confident in accepting referrals from them. Thus, gaining the right people for positions in our organisations can become less onerous and the positions are more likely to be filled with the right person for the job.
9. As networking involves connecting people with people, people with information and people with opportunities, the more we network, the more likely we are to recognise and be able to optimise opportunities on a larger scale for ourselves and for a wider range of people. Our networks become broader and broader.
10. People get to know us, our products and our services. And we know more about others and their current and changing business needs. Thus we can more easily match our products and services to their actual needs.

11. Although we all know that networking builds trust and positive relationships, the more we network the more we are reminded of this.
12. Through networking we are exposed to new ideas which we can transfer to our own situations. In addition, being able to test our ideas within trusted relationships creates opportunities for us to try new things, take prudent risks. Our network becomes a safety net.
13. Networking helps us to set new goals and create focus on what we want to achieve.
14. Elements of time management are significant. We get things done a lot faster by knowing who to go to. And this isn't always the decision-maker at the top. Sometimes, by having a good relationship with say, the CEO's personal assistant, we are more likely to get the appointment with the CEO.
15. By allowing more time for the important or strategic activities, there is more time available for a work/life balance. By having more quality time with family, we are able to concentrate on the important things at work and growth is more likely.
16. Life is more enjoyable when we work with people we know and trust, and this applies in our formal work positions, with our families and in our community engagements, too.
17. By guiding others, we develop our own leadership abilities and become recognised for those. This opens further opportunities for us and for others.
18. By developing our own potential further, through networking, people begin to perceive us as an expert in a field. Thus they come to us for advice and this often makes us lift our game and, in fact, we may become that expert.
19. We develop our field of influence. And this can apply at a micro (internal) or macro (external) level.
20. Networking can help you to build your skills so that you can meet challenges. Going beyond that point, you'll be in a state of flow.

What are you doing to:

- Connect people with others who might be of benefit to each other?
- Remind yourself of what information others are looking for?
- Keep focussed on your goals yet keep your peripheral vision 'open' so that you can recognise opportunities for networking?



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Personal networking: a different perspective

Reflection and generalisation

Three of my learning points through reading this chapter:

Active experimentation

As a result of the above I am going to take the following action: