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Become a More Charismatic Connector

You may think that "connectors" are born, not made. But, with a few pointers, anyone can learn to be a more powerful connector.

By Libby Gill

Not everyone is born confident and comfortable when it comes to making meaningful connections with others. Yet learning how to create authentic emotional links is an integral part of building any business or brand. Fortunately, you can improve your networking and relationship-building skills by practicing the following techniques:

- **Come out of your cubicle.** Connecting means leaving your cube (or corner office) to develop and nurture your ties before you need them. While it's easy to get buried in day-to-day challenges and think of networking as a luxury rather than a necessity, this is shortsighted when it comes to the big picture. It takes effort to create deep and lasting relationships that can create long-term value for you and others, so plan to schedule time for connection in person, not just online.
- **Prep for small talk.** Part of effective connection is having something to contribute that others will find valuable. Prepare for networking and other conversations by checking the news first. Pick a few tidbits to share, whether world news, industry updates, stock market predictions, or sports scores.
- **Act confident.** Research has shown that people who seem more confident are generally more successful than those who seem less confident—even if the latter group is more talented. Since you may be judged by how effectively you project yourself rather than on your abilities, work on demonstrating a more confident demeanor. Push yourself to speak up in meetings and initiate conversations. If necessary, fake it 'til you make it!
- **Be the go-to person.** To become a better connector, it helps to provide visible reasons for others to connect with you. When you know what's happening in your industry as well as in your company—and are familiar with who the hot players are (and aren't)—then you can build your reputation as being a valuable resource for your colleagues and contacts.

- **Focus on others.** People are interested in those who show interest in them. When you move the spotlight off of yourself and put the person you're speaking with on center stage, others think better of you. Think about how to add value to other people's projects and priorities. Become a hub for other people's relationships. By helping others connect, you also put yourself in the flow of information and opportunity.
- **Balance inspiration and information.** Whether it's a company that you want to connect with, a customer, or a new business contact, think about reaching them from the inside out, rather than the outside in. If you can both inspire others by sharing a personal backstory that others can relate to and benefit from—plus inform them in areas that are important to them—then you'll have a powerful two-pronged hook to draw people toward you.

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