



INTRODUCTION

this book is required reading

Only connect.

—E. M. Forster, *Howards End*

Learning Latin in Greek

On my first day of grad school at Cornell University, I attended micro-economics. The professor, in an attempt to calm our first-year jitters, explained in soothing tones that he would be showing a lot of graphs, yet there was no need to panic. He said, “Just think of graphs as flowcharts, and you’ll be fine.” As an arts professional with no background whatsoever in economics, I suddenly felt dizzy as my vision blurred. I had never heard of a flowchart. I was doomed.

I later described the experience of those first few weeks in business

school as like trying to learn Latin in Greek . . . except I didn't know Greek either. No matter how earnestly I took notes, a few hours later I had no idea what they meant.

A comparable pitfall exists when a self-declared *non-networker* tries very hard to follow networking rules written for a different species altogether. There is no point of reference. No mental bucket exists in which to dump the data. The data is fine. It is just in a foreign language. *This* networking book, on the other hand, is written in language spoken and understood by introverts, the overwhelmed, and the underconnected. What luck! You finally have a chance at a passing grade.

By the way, I now return to Cornell annually—teaching MBA students networking skills. I have yet to be asked back to lecture on economics, however.

Networking for People Who Hate Networking.

Why would such a book exist? Isn't it a bit like giving quiche recipes to people allergic to eggs and cheese? Or surrounding oneself with fragrant flowers despite suffering from severe hay fever? If you have an aversion to something that is not absolutely necessary, why not find something else to occupy your life? Why torture yourself?

These are solid questions. Thanks for asking.

Allow me to begin by saying I agree with you 100 percent. Do not waste a single precious hour on an activity you hate! Still, you are not off the hook that easily. You do not get to place this book back on the shelf (or e-shelf, as the case may be), proclaiming yourself water to networking's vinegar.

Instead, I am going to perform the astounding trick of making networking an enjoyable, rewarding activity. All without mind-altering substances! So find a comfy chair or patch of grass, crease this spine, and commit. You won't regret it.

This field guide begins by politely examining—and then shattering to pieces—traditional networking truisms. Commandments along the lines of:

- Promote yourself constantly.
- More contacts = higher probability of success.
- Never eat alone.
- Create non-stop touch points.
- Get *out there* as much as possible.

Until today (reality is subjective), networking books have been written for people of a particular temperament—the very personality style that is already predisposed to enjoy the prospect of spearing cheese in a room full of bustling strangers.

We will discover early in the book that this personality type comprises a paltry 30 to 50 percent of the general population. I am certain this is an unintended oversight on the part of other, well-meaning authors. Nevertheless, smoke comes out of my ears just thinking about it. The other 50 to 70 percent of humankind are being ignored. Misled. Bamboozled. It is time for the rest of us to take back our rightful share of the networking world.

And along the way we will discover the enormous value of understanding and leveraging our natural style when networking. No more stamping out our instincts.

Why Bother?

What's that you're mumbling? You don't like networking and have no interest, anyway? It drains you? It never works? You don't have time? You don't need to? It's phony, self-serving, fake, inauthentic, superficial, conniving, manipulative, and useless?

Hold it right there. Take a sip of water. Pull yourself together.

Introverts, the overwhelmed, and the underconnected fail at traditional networking by following advice never intended for us in the first place.

In my experience, people who proclaim to hate networking also believe they are not good at it. In fact, the reverse is true. You have the raw materials to be a stellar networker. You are simply following the wrong rules. Standard networking advice fails you, so you assume you fail at networking. Plus you *hate* it.

Now, at long last, you can learn a method of networking in keeping with the true you. Not a moment too soon.

What Is at Stake?

Only whatever you most want to accomplish in your life. No biggie.

Networking allows you to achieve your potential. Think of a Big Goal. Perhaps you want to find a new job, achieve a promotion, make a new professional or personal contact, improve the world, expand your influence, sell a product or service, write a book, seal a deal, improve collaboration, build a reputation, achieve your dream, or grow a business?

Networking will further your aim. In fifteen years as an executive coach, I have never met a person who did not benefit tremendously from learning how to network—on his or her own terms.

What is networking, really? Networking is the art of building and maintaining connections for shared positive outcomes.

Real networking is connecting.

The more authentic you are, the more resilient and valuable networks you create. You can learn networking techniques that rely on being true to yourself, using strengths you already have. You can learn to work with, rather than fight against, your lovable introverted,

overwhelmed, and/or underconnected self. Previously labeled liabilities are now your finest strengths.

Enticed?

Return on Investment (ROI)

Time is your most valuable asset (unless, perhaps, you are fabulously wealthy). What about this field guide merits devoting a couple hours of your precious time to it rather than *all* the other competing options out there?

- a. You will learn a new, super-effective method of networking described in accessible, easy-to-understand language.
- b. You will gain dozens of practical tips while learning clear, relevant action steps with *direct* application to your own networking goals.
- c. You will benefit from reading and investigating a myriad of memorable, real-life examples from my many years in many fields.

Grab a pen or pencil; you'll need it. There is no such thing as a free ride. Glad to have you along.