



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

April 2004 – Issue No. 14

Networking Naturally

by Robert M. Musen

We have all read the articles and books suggesting how to work your network if you have been displaced or are looking for another job. But, that assumes that you have built a network. The fact is that we all have in front of us the elements of a network: acquaintances and/or colleagues and a track record. We just need to put them together.

The key is to work your network naturally, everyday on your job, when you don't need it. I will provide four examples.

Former Colleagues

In today's employment environment, there is considerable turnover, so we all know someone who has announced plans to leave our current employer. I suggest that whenever someone makes their intentions known, you ask that person for their new contact information; offer to help them wrap up affairs before leaving and to act as a liaison if there is something that they need after they have left. This is also true for employees who have been displaced. If you feel comfortable, offer to write them a general letter of introduction as they seek new employment and suggest that they contact you periodically to see if you have heard of any opportunities.

You can never have too many contacts at other employers. And, sad as it sounds, former colleagues in new jobs can be more valuable to your career than those colleagues still working for the same employer as you.

Industry Contacts

Serving on industry committees is an excellent way to expand your network. This is a chance to meet people in similar jobs to you at different employers as well as those with similar credentials performing very different functions. Industry committees attract insurance and reinsurance actuaries, regulators, industry association actuaries, consultants and actuaries in private practice. Contacting fellow committee members, to discuss common issues confronting you, provides an opportunity for each of you to get to know the other better. Follow their careers as they move on and keep your contact list current.

Consultants

Those who work at insurance companies have almost certainly had the opportunity to engage or work with consultants (either consulting actuaries or management consultants), and vice versa. Developing a rapport with a consultant or the client is another good way to expand your network.

Unique Opportunities

During the course of your career, you may be asked to testify as an expert witness, or you may be deposed in an arbitration. You might be recruiting talent at a college or university. You might volunteer to teach a course or to lecture at a local college. Each of these opportunities provides you with a chance to extend your network. Get to know the lawyer at the arbitration and correspond with him or her occasionally. Likewise, stay in contact with the career counselor or professor at the local col-



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Got Time? • continued from prior page

Control

This is for all those people who like to “do it all themselves.” Since our time is so precious, it pays to look for ways to **leverage** activities. This means **having someone else perform part or all of the task**. This works especially well with repetitive activities which are time-consuming and don’t necessarily require your expertise. If you have an expert you can leverage tasks to, all the better. You also want to leverage the tasks you don’t do as well (yes, there may be one or two things) to someone who can do them better and faster.

“Leveraging” does not mean you give the task away and forget about it. You want to still make sure it gets done and gets done right. Leveraging also allows you to spend more time on the things you are best at that will profit your business the most. Finally, leveraging will only work if you give up your need for full *control* and opt for *managing* the task instead.

Commitment

Finally, you want to commit to your weekly plan. Commitment embodies the following:

- **Scheduling specific times** when you will work on various projects throughout the week (in essence, making an appointment with yourself to spend time on a certain task)
- **Resisting the temptation** to be distracted and react to the “urgent, but not important” and
- **Maintaining laser focus** on achieving these outcomes by keeping them in front of you daily (or even hourly) and reviewing your reasons regularly for motivation, as needed.

No matter what time management system you use, if you apply these four principles consistently week after week, the months and years will take care of themselves. □

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lege. They hear about others who are doing jobs like yours, and who knows, some day you may want to do a job like theirs.

Do it now, not later

Expanding your network as discussed above can produce 100+ contacts in just a year or two. It’s a lot easier to exchange contact information and ask about what’s going on in the job market when you’re not seeking employment. People tend to be more open when they know that you have a job. What is a simple exchange of information when both parties are employed becomes more like a favor when you are out of work and ask about the market.

Building a network takes vigilance. You need to continually update your contact list, and you need to maintain periodic contact with everyone on the list. Otherwise, they become names on a page, not branches of a network.

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