

Book Title: **Never Eat Alone and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time**
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Publisher: DOUBLEDAY (a division of Random House, Inc.)
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Networking – a term that has been almost solely (although wrongly) linked in job hunting. When this book was suggested to me by a colleague in the retained search field, I assumed the book, judging by its title, would simply be another networking/job hunting book. Because I enjoy books on this topic, I thankfully took the time to read it. My prejudice could not have been further from the truth.

The book starts with the following quote by Margaret Wheatley:

- Relationships are all there is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals that can go it alone.

This quote sets the tone for the remainder of the book. An additional tone setting premise is the author's lesson on generosity. He simply states that when you help others, they often help you and that *real* networking is about finding ways to make other people more successful (giving more than you get).

There are, of course, key reminders and lessons about networking that often seem to be forgotten. While I will list a few of these in a moment, it is the book's discussion on balance that was one of the themes that took me by surprise. For those of you that know me well, I am often labeled a networker and/or connector. I commonly have networking conversations with people in transition who, early in our conversation, admit that networking was on their 'back burner' while they were immersed in their work/career. They sometimes boast of their LinkedIn page, but not of actually talking/meeting with people.

When we get busy at work (out of 'balance'), our tendency is to bring our lunch and eat at our desk. Talking with people often turns into simply attending the mandated meetings on our calendar (all work related). While sometimes necessary, the fact that this often becomes a habit commonly leads to dissatisfaction or disengagement at work. Our stress level rises and studies show (as pointed out in the book) that individualistic cultures typically report higher stress levels than people who work in more community-oriented cultures. Connecting with others is invigorating and, as research proves, brings us greater happiness in all aspects of our lives. When our lonely lives catch up to us, we often turn to self-help books. We need to take this same time/energy and connect with the people that bring us to a better mental state and place.

The author talks about being front and center in someone's mental rolodex. To do this, you need to take action – and he almost prescribes a way. While somewhat mathematical, the lessons are clear:

- People you are contacting to create a new relationship need to see or hear your name in at least three modes of communication.
- Once you have gained the recognition you sought, you need to nurture the relationship with a call or e-mail at least once a month.
- To transform a contact into a friend, you need a minimum of two face-to-face meetings (and out of an office setting).
- Maintaining a secondary relationship requires two or three 'pings' a year.

Now to those basic, but important and often neglected, reminders on networking:

- Starting with the end, JUST DO IT! Set a goal for yourself relating to reconnecting with a friend/colleague or meeting with a new person – either daily or weekly. (Daily does sound overwhelming; weekly is very achievable.)
- Don't schmooze have something to say and say it with passion. You're only as good as what you give away.
- Be transparent. People respond when they know you are dealing straight with them.
- Don't be TOO efficient. Nothing comes off as less sincere than receiving a mass e-mail addressed to a long list of recipients.

While written in 2005 (wow – 5 years ago!), the use, importance and prominence of technology is not lost on the author. That said, he ends by reminding us that we as human beings are social beings. Our success is not contingent on technology; it is contingent on whom you know and how you work with them. Use technology to find new ways to connect with people, not as your interactive device.

The final paragraph contains one more reminder: “What's important probably won't come down to a job, a company, or a cool new piece of technology. It will come down to people.”