

Book Review: Is Your Net Working?

By Ramona Creel

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For some people, the term NETWORKING has developed a bad reputation. Networking is often equated with cocktail parties, exchanged business cards, and insincere promises. But networking has evolved and grown into a way to build your business, reduce your workload, and increase your resource base. In the classic book, "Is Your 'Net' Working?" author Anne Boe teaches readers how to make the most of networking opportunities in every area of their lives.

From the very beginning, Ms. Boe emphasizes that building a network is only partly "work" -- the remainder should involve enjoyable SOCIAL INTERACTIONS. You can meet some fascinating people through networking -- people who inspire, educate, entertain, and support you in throughout your various endeavors. You create a network so the group can collectively pool its resources, information, and contacts. And your "NET" is already larger than you might imagine. It includes people you have met through work, extra-curricular activities, clubs, and professional associations -- as well as family, friends, and casual acquaintances. The trick is knowing how to MAXIMIZE these relationships. Ms. Boe suggests that, in order to become a successful networker, you need to hone your skills in three key areas:

QUID PRO QUO (OR, HOW USEFUL ARE YOU TO SOMEONE ELSE?)

The first principle to understand is that other people don't always belong to your network -- sometimes you belong to ANOTHER PERSON'S network. Once you look at your relationships in this new way, you begin to realize that the world doesn't revolve around you and your needs.

Ms. Boe points out several enticing reasons for belonging to someone else's network -- such as building a good REPUTATION with other professionals. And calculating though it may sound, it's always nice to have a reservoir of FAVORS that other people owe you (it's like saving for a rainy day -- never know when you might need some help!) If you want a real eye-opener, check out some of Ms. Boe's exercises -- you will begin to realize how much you actually have to offer other people!

COMMUNICATING WITH EFFECTIVENESS AND POWER

The first chapter subheading in this section really sums up the message within -- "There are no mistakes in communication, there are only outcomes." Ms. Boe gets right to the heart of why people fail to communicate accurately as she discusses a variety of communication OBSTACLES and how to overcome them.

The most difficult obstacle to surmount involves interpersonal dynamics -- hidden messages,

incorrect interpretations, and the relationship between the two communicators. If you want to overcome these kinds of miscommunication, work through Ms. Boe's ACTIVE LISTENING and FEEDBACK exercises. She will teach you how to increase your listening span, give and receive constructive criticism, and to infuse your communications with confidence and authority.

SURMOUNTING REJECTION

We all face fear of rejection in our relationships -- both personal and professional. No one likes to feel snubbed, disregarded, or unwanted. But you must be willing to take a RISK in order to form a bond with another person -- and that bond is critical to a networking relationship. Let's pretend that you ask a colleague for a professional favor, and are turned down. As Ms. Boe points out, this is not necessarily a rejection of you, only of the REQUEST.

A rejection should not be viewed as an excuse to give up, but a CALL TO ACTION. Evaluate the way in which the request was made, your timing, and the reasonableness of your request. Then, think of some alternative suggestions that might seem more attractive to the other party -- networking is about creating a WIN-WIN situation for everyone involved. By learning to accept both positive and negative responses to your networking efforts gracefully, you will eventually learn to turn those rejections to your advantage.

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