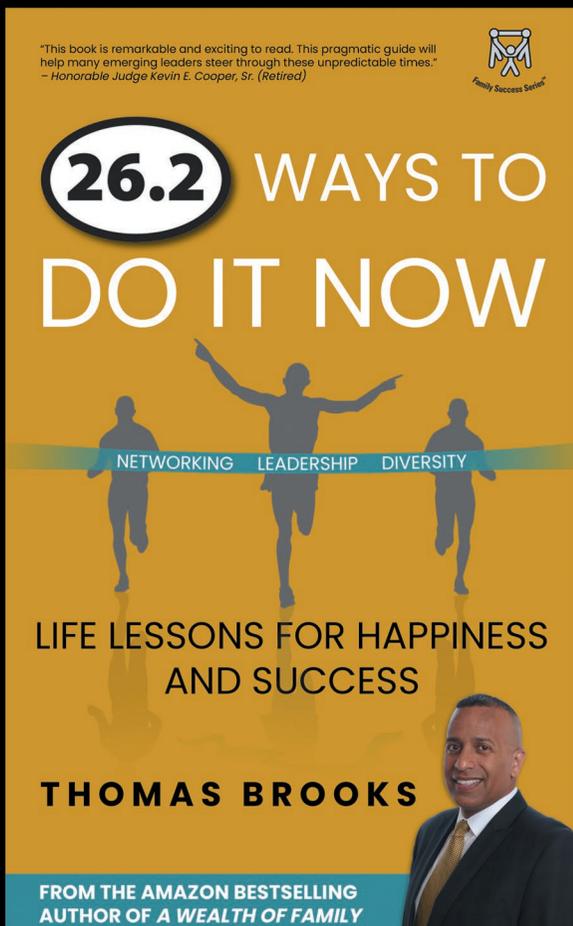


FREE CHAPTER

Chapter Nine

YOUR NETWORK IS YOUR NET WORTH



YOUR FREE GUIDE
TO HELP ADVANCE YOUR
CAREER OR ENTREPRENEURIAL
DREAMS!

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CHAPTER NINE

YOUR NETWORK IS YOUR NET WORTH

“Networking is more about ‘farming’ than it is about ‘hunting’. It’s about cultivating relationships.”

— **Dr. Ivan Misner, Founder of BNI, the world's largest business networking organization**

The most effective and successful business leaders from across the globe are typically clever and skillful at developing relationships. Networking is an essential unwritten rule of achievement in any endeavor.

Life Lesson:

Networking is an essential unwritten rule of achievement in any endeavor.

Some of us network well in social settings, such as parties but miss opportunities for networking to advance our careers or entrepreneurial endeavors. This chapter gives you a guide to developing mutually beneficial business relationships through networking, which is an

indispensable part of wealth creation. I believe that we can all put these principles into action to become better at building valuable connections with people:

- Have a Strategic Plan
- Have a Giving Mindset
- Show Up
- Do Not Be Afraid to Ask
- Be a “Thought Leader”
- Volunteer
- Have a Reason to Follow Up
- Follow Up

Let’s take a closer look at each of the eight keys to networking success:

Key 1 - Have a Strategic Plan

Figure out your career or entrepreneurial goals, and then put in place a networking plan and list of desired relationships to make it happen. For example, if you want to be U. S. Surgeon General, start by making a list of politicians, executives at the Center for Disease Control, American Medical Association (AMA) leaders, and even former surgeon generals that you want to meet. As you make progress in your career, continually revise your goals and your list of desired networking contacts. If you have an aggressive goal (e.g., CEO of a Fortune 500 firm, raising \$50 million in venture capital), network above your current peer group. Do not take on a snobbish attitude with your current peers but stretch yourself to meet the “high-flyers”.

Key 2 – Have a Giving Mindset

Before you begin the execution of your strategic plan, take on a sincere giving mindset. Be ready to give, help, or facilitate. The goal of your networking efforts should not be an immediate gain for yourself. For example, in job searching, do not lead with your resume; set up a 15-minute phone meeting, or better yet, a meeting in person with the hiring manager. The outcome of the meeting may be that the job is not right for you and that you may give the hiring manager a lead for the person that is eventually hired. Now, you have helped two people, the hiring manager and the newly hired employee. You grew your sphere of influence, which will benefit you in the long run.

I learned a valuable lesson from the famous author and motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar, *“You can have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”*

Key 3 - Show Up

You must get out there. Take advantage of receptions and events held by organizations in which you are a member. Better yet, attend functions held by organizations where you can find the high-flyers on your strategic list (see Key #1). Since you must eat anyway, use meals to move relationships forward, as you do when dating. For example, if you are new to your company’s marketing department, have lunch with the engineering manager. Or, instead of eating dinner alone, attend a reception that serves hors d'oeuvres to make good use of your valuable time.

When you get there, make sure you are prepared. This means that you not only have a business card, but you also know what you have to offer (Key #2) to the people that you want to meet. Know your approach so that you are confident as you break the ice. Make relevant conversation and then close smoothly without monopolizing the other person's entire evening. Do not leave the conversation without a reason to follow up (Key #7).

Life Lesson:

Know your approach, so that you are confident as you break the ice. Make relevant conversation and then close smoothly without monopolizing their entire evening.

Key 4 - Do Not Be Afraid to Ask

As you already know, the worst thing that can happen when you ask is that you get a “no” as a response. If you approach each interaction with a giving attitude and build a relationship first, you will be in a stronger position before you ask for help. Find a connection first, even if it is something as simple as the fact that you both grew up in the same state. Also, when you ask for something, make it easy for the person to say yes. For example, if you have a mentor, do not ask her to get you promoted in six months, but do ask her to coach you on how you can develop the skills that will make you more likely to be promoted by the various managers in the company.

Key 5 - Be a “Thought Leader”

You want to have something intriguing to say at all these lunches, dinners, and networking receptions. Strive to be a “thought leader,” especially in your particular field. When you have something interesting to say, people will remember you when you follow up with them later. Also, once you are recognized as a thought leader, you should get yourself placed as a speaker or panel discussion participant at conferences and workshops. This is free PR to build your individual “brand” and enhance your scope of influence in your field. Also, it is amazingly easy to network when people are approaching *you* after your speech.

Key 6 - Volunteer

With a sincere, giving mindset, get involved – especially locally – in a way that is congruent with your strategic plan. Eventually, you want to get on the board of the organization where you volunteer. For example, I have a real passion for reaching back to help inner-city youth. Thus, I have worked for about eight years as a volunteer in Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta in the Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) teen mentoring program. The LOT program is sponsored by the National Black MBA Association (NBMBA). Eventually, I became a board member of NBMBA-Atlanta, which allowed me to meet an eventual business partner for an online business. Of course, I did not know I would meet an eventual business partner in Atlanta when I started volunteering for LOT years before in Houston. However, it did make strategic sense for me to do my volunteering work under the umbrella of a professional organization of high-flyers (NBMBA) rather than through another community organization.

Key 7 - Have a Reason to Follow Up

When you meet a high-flyer that can enhance your strategic plan, do not leave the conversation without a reason to follow up. Usually, this reason should be based on something you can volunteer to do to help them. For example, if you are a young med student and you meet your U.S. congressman at a reception, ask for his card so that you can volunteer for the next campaign. Tell the congressman about your friend who edits a video blog that might want to do an interview about the congressman's education bill. Remember, the goal of your networking efforts should not be an immediate gain for yourself. Ten years later, that same congressman may be in a position to help you get on an important public policy committee as you pursue your goal of being Surgeon General (see previous example). Before you follow up, ask the person how they want you to follow up (e.g., some people prefer a phone call on Friday morning, and some prefer e-mail).

Life Lesson:

When you meet a high-flyer that can enhance your strategic plan, do not leave the conversation without a reason to follow up.

Key 8 - Follow Up

Always follow up. The high-flyers that you want in your sphere of influence meet many people every day. Some follow up, but most do not. And when you do follow up, remember to be courteous to the person that answers the phone. It may be a secretary whose intention

is to screen all calls. Be ready to give a compelling reason why the high-flyer should return your call. For example, the reason, “The congressman asked me to give him a call to help facilitate an interview with an influential blogger who happens to be a friend of mine. The interview may result in coverage of the congressman’s reelection bid”, is a compelling rationale to get the assistant to put your call through.

In summary, do not forget that networking can take place anywhere, at any time. So, be prepared and make sure you bring something to the table. Bring a business card, too, though you definitely want to get *their* contact information, whether they are carrying a business card or not. Like any other important activity, you must practice. Always be genuine; be yourself. Remember, networking not only enhances your survival; it also leads to your success.

“The richest people in the world look for and build networks; everyone else looks for work. Marinate on that for a minute.”

— Robert Kiyosaki, entrepreneur
and author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*

#DoltNow – What Actions Will You Take as a Result of Reading This Chapter?

1)

2)

3)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Thomas Brooks is the Founder of Alpha Multimedia, Inc., a marketing, public relations, and public speaking firm. He brings over 20 years of marketing and PR experience to this business. He previously worked in marketing roles for Hewlett-Packard (HP), Lucent Technologies, and Texas Instruments. Brooks has been published more than twenty times, and he has participated in panel discussions at many trade shows. He has been featured in articles, on the radio, and on TV. He won the annual *Career Communications Magazine* national award for “Excellence in Technical Sales and Marketing.”

Brooks earned his B.S. Electrical Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and his MBA from the University of Maryland. His first book, *A Wealth of Family: An Adopted Son's International Quest for Heritage, Reunion, and Enrichment*, was an Amazon bestseller in its category and was named a “Best Books” Award Winner by USA Book News. His second book, *26.2 Ways to Do It Now: Life Lessons for Happiness and Success*, launched in 2021.

As a John Maxwell Certified Coach, Teacher, Trainer and Speaker, Brooks can offer you workshops, seminars, keynote speaking, and coaching, aiding your personal and professional growth through study and practical application of John Maxwell’s proven leadership methods.

Brooks is a life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and the National Black MBA Association. He enjoys public speaking, snow skiing, and cycling. He lives with his wife and children near Houston, Texas, USA.