

BRIDGING THE

CONNECTION GAP

Using The Connection Loop to Grow Your Professional Network

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What We'll Cover Today

Here is the full structure — in order — before we start.

1 My networking story

2 Common obstacles to networking (and why they're not your fault)

3 The Connection Loop — all 5 steps, shown upfront

4 Step 1: Start With Who You Know

5 Step 2: Connect Online, Build Relationships In Person

6 Step 3: Listen and Give

7 Step 4: Be Easy to Help

8 Step 5: Make It a Habit

MY NETWORKING STORY

*Building a system
that works for you*

01

October 2012 — a sporting clays networking event I said yes to because I needed a job.

02

Three hours of pretending to belong. Awkward small talk with strangers. None of it felt natural.

03

Sitting in my car afterward: there has got to be a better way.

04

I stopped going to events. I built a process instead — one that worked with my schedule, my space, my style.

The goal: networking based on real exchange — not performance.

"I Know I Need to Network, But..."

You don't need to share which one is yours — just notice if any apply.

1 I feel like I'm taking advantage of people

2 I don't know where to start

3 I don't know anyone

4 I don't have time

5 It feels awkward

None of these are excuses. They are real problems — and most exist because networking was never explicitly taught.

The Connection Loop — All 5 Steps

Here is the complete system before we go into any of it.

1

Start With Who You Know

Dormant ties — people who know your name but you've lost touch with

2

Connect Online, Build Relationships In Person

Low-pressure message → real-time conversation

3

Listen and Give

Ask questions, then offer something useful (A.I.R.)

4

Be Easy to Help

Share your Target Company List — one specific action they can take

5

Make It a Habit

One small action per day, five minutes, consistently

STEP

1

START WITH WHO YOU KNOW

70–80%

actual response rate
(vs. 30–40% expected)
MIT Sloan Research

What are dormant ties?

People you've worked with, studied with, or met through organizations — who know your name, but you haven't been in contact with for a while. The connection still exists. It's just been inactive.

Why start here?

Introductions from people who already know you have a far higher success rate than cold outreach to strangers. And the response rate is nearly twice what most people expect.

How to build your list

Go through your resume or LinkedIn experience section. Pick 2–3 past employers. List colleagues who have since moved to other organizations. Aim for 5–10 names.

Step 2: Connect Online, Build Relationships In Person

PHONE

Phone call

VIDEO

Video call
(camera off is fine)

IN PERSON

In-person
coffee

WRITTEN

Written exchange
(also valid)

Why real-time conversation helps

- Ask follow-up questions immediately
- Exchange more in 20 min than a week of email
- Get context that writing often loses

The Reconnect Message

"I was thinking about you recently and realized we haven't been in touch for a while. I'd like to catch up — would you be open to a short phone or video call?"

- "I was thinking about you" — You put them on your list — this is accurate.
- "We haven't been in touch" — Acknowledges the gap. No apology needed.
- "Would you be open" — A yes/no question. Easy to respond to.

STEP

3

LISTEN AND GIVE

The Science

When people talk about themselves, dopamine is released. They associate that good feeling with the conversation — and with you.

Two goals: listen first, then give. This order matters.

A

Advice

Share something you know that helps with a specific problem they mentioned.

"When we dealt with that in my last role, here's what worked..."

I

Introduction

Connect them to someone who could help with what they're working on.

"I know someone who does exactly that kind of work. Would an email intro be useful?"

R

Recommendation

Point them to a specific resource relevant to something they mentioned.

"You mentioned X — there's a book called [title] that addresses exactly that."

Step 4: Be Easy to Help

Most people genuinely want to help. But vague asks don't give them anywhere to start. Our job is to give them one specific action to take.

HARD TO HELP ✗

"Here's my resume — could you pass it on to anyone who might be interested?"

Problem: puts the entire burden on them. Figure out the role, find who to send it to, figure out how to introduce you. Too much — most people won't act.

EASY TO HELP ✓

Your Target Company List — 10–20 companies you're curious about. Their one question: "Do I know anyone here?"

Yes or no. That's easy to answer. That's what makes you easy to help.

Three things that can happen:

- They know someone on your list → email introduction immediately
- They think of a similar company you hadn't considered → introduction there
- They keep the list → when those names come up later, they'll think of you

Step 5: Make It a Habit

One action. Five minutes. Every day.

1 Add one name to your dormant ties list

3 Add one company to your target list

2 Send one reconnect message

4 Schedule or have one voice-to-voice conversation this week

Why this framing works

These are small, defined actions. They don't require a burst of social energy. You're in control of when, how much, and at what pace. One pass through the loop produces one conversation. Consistent small actions produce a growing network.

The Connection Loop — All 5 Steps

1**Start With Who You Know**

Dormant ties. 70–80% response rate. Lower risk, higher yield than cold outreach.

2**Connect Online, Build Relationships In Person**

Low-pressure written message → real-time conversation (phone, video, in person).

3**Listen and Give**

Ask questions. Give something useful based on what you heard: A.I.R.

4**Be Easy to Help**

Share your Target Company List. One specific, answerable ask.

5**Make It a Habit**

One action per day. Five minutes. The loop repeats — each new contact starts it again.

**NETWORKING STARTS
WITH ONE PERSON...**

THAT ONE PERSON IS YOU.

Networking is not a personality trait. It is a set of actions with a logic behind them.

Your first action — before today is over:

Open your phone, email, or LinkedIn. Find one person who is a dormant tie. Don't send the message yet if you're not ready. Just find the person. That's step one.