

# It's All Who You Know

By Doreen Amatelli, MBA, Professional Certified Coach and Workshop Leader

In my early 20's, I *hated* networking. When I joined AT&T I thought the idea of using your relationships to get something was deceitful and dishonest. Read on.....

Jim (name changed), was an "idea man" and one of the best networkers (or con artists) I ever met. Jim was a co-worker who was hired into our marketing department from sales. Something struck me about him. Every time I had to meet with him about a work-related issue, he was always willing to talk with me—about everything except work! Furthermore, I always seem to leave our meetings with the responsibility of the action item. After a few more meetings like this, I realized what he was doing. When I confronted him, he replied, "I'm not much of an implementer." Well, at least he was aware of his weaknesses. Jim got this job through his co-worker, who he used to work with in the sales field, who also was just hired into our department. Hmmm!

I quickly discovered that many people who were offered career opportunities were not, in my opinion, better at their job than I was. In fact, many of them were less qualified. So, how do these people survive or even thrive in a company?

Well, it's been said that people will do business with whom they know and like. In fact, if two people applied for a position or bid on a project with the exact same qualifications and background, the one who would most likely get the job would be the one who is better liked by the hiring manager.

Look at it another way. Regardless of the person's ability to do the job, would you rather work with someone you like or someone you didn't?

So, is networking a bad thing? If you consciously choose to connect with your contacts in order to obtain something, is that dishonest? I guess it would be if you didn't have the substance behind you to support your claims or if you didn't offer information or opportunities for others to network with your contacts.

Networks are present in all facets of our lives—our brains are made of neural networks, businesses like MCI offered a long-distance discount service called "Friends and Family". And, probably the biggest network that revolutionized new ways and opportunities for sharing information is the internet. I recently was invited to attend a virtual network that, when invited, you are linked with the people with whom your host knows and with whom they know, and so on. Through this medium, I have met new business associates and reconnected with past co-workers.

Over the years in corporate America and now in my own business, I realize that networking is especially valuable and fulfilling to both those with whom I network and those who want to network with me.

In this life, we are all connected anyway (by at most 6 degrees, I have discovered), so why not encourage and strengthen these connections when we can. Needless to say, I no longer *hate* networking!

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