

3 kinds of networking and only 1 works

A few days ago, I got an email from a “friend” asking me to attend one of those sales parties masquerading as a wine and cheese with friends. This person has had no interaction with me in a couple of years. Why would she think I would be interested in helping her out and attending her “party?”

Have you experienced this? Someone reaches out to you when she or he needs something from you. Not before and not after. This person doesn't understand how networking works.



Girl Scout Friendship
Circlly by Kimberly K on
Flickr

Basically, there are three kinds of networking:

1. Networking rarely or not at all. You have an incomplete LinkedIn profile (bonus points if it is missing a photograph), you have never posted anything on Twitter or even Facebook, and you rarely, if ever, attend networking events in person.

2. Networking only when you need something. You lost your job, and you had not been networking at all. Suddenly, you need

connections. You start networking like crazy. Or, your kid is selling cookies for a fundraiser, so you hit up all your Facebook friends for support even though you never so much as like a post or wish anybody happy birthday. (Or, like my "friend" above, you need to make some extra money for the holidays.)

3. Networking all the time. You are conscious about keeping up with people. You actively attend events and maybe even participate in planning them. You are active in social media, and post updates to LinkedIn frequently (but not with annoying frequency). You Tweet and you connect via Facebook. You share stuff your connections post.

Guess which one works the best...yes, that would be number 3, always networking.

Networks are about relationships and relationships take time and nurturing. The only way to build a strong network is to invest time and effort. Whether you do it in person or on social media, you have to devote energy to it.

If you don't build relationships at all, well then you don't have any. If you haven't nurtured your relationships, why do you expect those people to help you?

The lesson here is simple. Nurture your network before you need it. Don't abandon it, ever.