



Keyword: Nurture

Ten Ways to Nurture Your Network

by Kevin Eikenberry

We all have personal networks – the groups of people who make up your professional and personal collection of friends, colleagues, acquaintances, etc.

Unfortunately, we almost all also have people we used to know or were close to that we have lost track of or fallen out of touch with. Whether personally or professionally, I'm sure that this has happened to you and you look back with some amount of regret.

Let me ask you a question: "Are you doing things now to keep that from happening to some of the people in your current network?" If not, you are doomed to these same regrets later on, when people you value and enjoy are no longer in your network.

If you want to change that outcome you need to consistently and consciously nurture your relationships. Here are ten things in no particular order you can do to build and support your network and keep connected to those people you'd like to be connected to!

Commit. Decide that you don't want the "I wonder where they are and how they are doing?" regrets in the future. Make a decision to retain the relationships that matter and nurture your network.

Call. Has it been awhile since you've talked with someone? Give them a call. No need to have an agenda or a reason (in fact it might be better than waiting to call until you "need something"). Just call to say hello and that you are thinking of them. It doesn't need to be a long call. Be proactive and make that call.

Send a card. The alternative to the call is a card. Written cards are becoming so rare that they are becoming a more powerful tool in nurturing your network. A quick note of hello, thanks or congratulations can be huge. Nurture your network – and help the postal service – and send a card.

Learn about their interests. Know what they are interested in and send them things related to it. If your friend likes lighthouses and you see an article, send it. If your friend likes antique tractors, let them know when you see one for sale (that's me by the way – if you know about antique John Deere stuff, let me know!). You don't have to share their interests, just know them and forward information and ideas that you hear, see or read. (This is a great "excuse" for the call or to send a card!)



Ten Ways to Nurture Your Network (continued)

Learn more about their goals. When you know what other people want to achieve, you are in a better position to help them reach those goals. There likely will be ways you can help, but only if you know what they want. Ask your friends and colleagues what they want to achieve personally and professionally. Then, listen and look for ways to help.

Offer to help and then help. Once you know what they want, you may be able to help. Make that offer – and then make sure you do it! If you offer, do it.

Be a connector. Sharing ideas and information is great, but when you connect people with *other people* it can be extremely powerful. Introduce people to others that share interests or can help them reach a goal. You may know someone who shares their passion for hot peppers, introduce them. You may know someone who could be a Client or collaborator, make the introduction. Be a connector.

Follow-up. Perhaps the most important thing you can do is follow-up. Follow-up on the actions you've taken to make sure they helped; follow-up to make sure that people have actually connected when you have suggested it. Follow-up on all the commitments you make to others. Follow-up.

Don't worry about you. Keep your focus on helping, aiding and supporting the other person. Let the Law of Reciprocity work for you. The seeds you plant by focusing on the other person will grow into great things for you, but never make that the reason for connecting. Connect to help the other person.

Do it now. I've written very little here that you don't understand or haven't heard before. The question is ... are you doing it?

None of these things are urgent, but they are very important. Start now. Connect or reconnect with someone today (and everyday). Whether you apply one of these ideas or one of a hundred others, just do it. The sooner the better. How about right now?



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