

Recent Accolades

**Presenter at “Lose the Fear, Sell Yourself, Get the Job You Want.”**

Event details: <http://bit.ly/12UnlL>

Catherine Baum's presentation on social capital

One Saturday afternoon I read “Achieving Success Through Social Capital: Tapping Hidden Resources in Your Personal and Business Networks” by Wayne Baker, a professor at the University of Michigan Business School. I was so inspired I presented a summary of his book and tied some of my own stories to his points at career consultant Angela Lussier's networking event in Springfield, MA. Here is a wrap-up of my presentation.

**Everyone: Look at the person next to you and introduce yourself.**

There were about 70 people in the audience, most of whom looked surprised by my request. Once they realized I was serious, people exchanged smiles and handshakes. It took a few minutes to regain their attention.

**Everyone: You just created an opportunity to turn a human encounter into a human moment.**

Each face-to-face encounter is an opportunity to invest in your **social capital**. A human moment requires two things:

- 1) Physical presence: Two people can discuss a job or project over the phone, but they're not having a human moment unless they're in the same place. In other words, you have to have dinner first.
- 2) Attention: Two people can sit next to each other on a 10-hour plane ride, but they won't have a human moment if they don't look up from their books to talk.

**What is social capital?**

Social capital is the resources available in and through personal and business networks. “Social” emphasizes resources aren't personal assets; No one single person owns them.

Whereas **human capital** is *what you know* (the sum of your knowledge, skills and experience); **social capital** is *who you know* (the size, quality and diversity of your networks)

**Why should we invest in our social capital?**

Rich social capital produces higher pay, faster promotions, better jobs, breakthrough ideas, new business opportunities and profits.

**Individualism, or the belief that success is an individual enterprise, is a MYTH.**

In order to build social capital, you must believe in it first. That means you must let go of Superman. Even a hero needs others – without a following, how can a hero be deemed a hero? Here's how two heads are better than one:

Natural talent: You may be a naturally fast runner, but you'll be even faster if you have

competition.

Intelligence: You may be naturally gifted, but schooling is sure to foster your intellect.

Education: You may learn a lot reading books, but observation of and interaction with others will teach you how others interpret those books.

Effort: You may try really hard on your own, but trying hard in a workplace with high productivity will produce greater effort with greater results.

Luck: Chance favors the prepared mind. Did you know that some science labs are designed to encourage random interactions and casual conversations among scientists from various departments?

### **Health benefits**

Rich social capital provides you with the kind of benefits that aren't deducted from your paycheck. Relationships make us happier and healthier. They prevent the common cold and make you live longer.

### **Evaluate your social capital**

Most people don't have an accurate fix on their social capital. In fact, they don't even understand the wants and needs of their spouses and close friends, although they think they do.

People tend to have small homogenous, internally-focused networks, which are great for building trust and cooperation, but typically don't lead you to new information and opportunities. I could join every journalism organization out there and still lack an understanding of the fields I could cover and the causes and events I might write about. Broaden your horizons and join more groups, associations and organizations. Think professional organizations, philanthropies, sports clubs, alumni associations, religion and other hobbies.

Or, take a shortcut and connect with a **linchpin**. A linchpin is someone whose network includes people from all fields, locations and generations. Angela Lussier, the creative career consultant who hosted this event, is a linchpin. Connect with her.

### **Build your own network**

You be the architect. Choose to connect with people who will enable you to achieve your goals, fulfill a mission and make your contribution. You use people already, despite how weird that sounds. You decide who you want to marry or divorce; you decide whether you want to have children, and you decide who you want to hire or fire. Is this person, you ask yourself, an asset or expense to my life/company?

Become a linchpin yourself and fill **structural holes**. A structural hole is an opportunity to create value by linking people. To fill a structural hole, stay in communication with people in your networks, make introductions, respond to introductions and requests, host informal gatherings and bridge internal organizational clumps.

Your physical proximity strongly influences your relationships, attitudes and behaviors. Your networks are shaped by the focus of your activities. I chose to pursue videography so I could network with employees in the news organization's multimedia department. In addition to sharpening a new skill, I'm learning about how the print and multimedia departments are

connected. I'm also identifying opportunities for growth in our storytelling.

Check out your company's rotation programs and incentive systems. Become a linchpin at the company.

If you can't find the group you're looking for, create it yourself. Make your own programs, organizations, procedures or committees.

### **Tapping your resources**

If you want to go north, head south. If you want help now or in the future, see how you help others. Do everything you can to help others. People will be grateful for your efforts and are likely to reciprocate. Remember, the less we worry, the more we receive.

When you do make a request, it should be an honest expression of your need for help without the expectation of receiving help. Try personal, email, public and direct mail requests.

### **Opps: A checklist**

While it would be wonderful to check off everything we do right, it would also be inefficient. Let's assume for the most part we do what's right. An efficient way, then, to track our progress is to keep a tally of what we're doing wrong. What needs improvement? Keep of a weekly log of the things you've missed, and adjust the next week accordingly.

- 1) Failure to convert a human encounter into a human moment.
- 2) Failure to reconnect with an old contact once a week.
- 3) Missed opportunity to fill a structural hole.
- 4) Failure to share information.
- 5) Delayed return call, email, letter.
- 6) Late for meetings.
- 7) Failure to attend association meetings.
- 8) Failure to send thank you notes.
- 9) Canceling lunch appointments.
- 10) Delayed updating of contact information at the first available opportunity.

Identify where you need improvement, make the improvements, build your social capital.

**Everyone: I encourage you to have human moments with whomever you introduced yourself to. Give them your full attention. See how you might help them; See how they might help you. Each person in this room has an opportunity to make the world a more connected place. Now do it.**