

CHAPTER 17:

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# BUILDING BRIDGES

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*“All things being equal, people will do business with a friend; all things being unequal, people will still do business with a friend.”*

*– Mark McCormack*

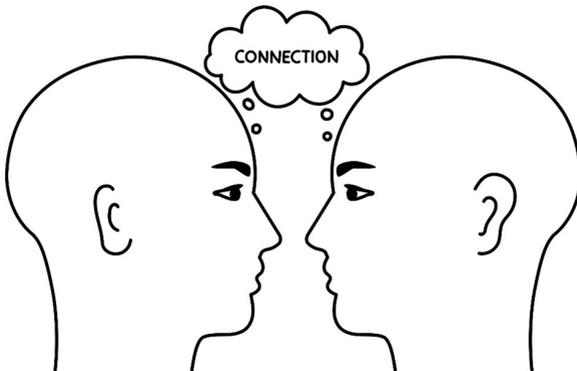
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I went to meet a foreign business owner who was running a successful aromatherapy business. Other coaches had told me that business owners from this country were challenging clients to attract and tend to resist the idea that they could improve on what they are doing. These ideas were in my head as I strolled into his office for our session together.

The meeting was a battle from the start. I tried every angle to find areas where he would express an interest in help, and he just kept quiet or defended the way he did things. Finally, after an hour of trying (at one point, we were practically shouting at each other), I sat back in my seat.

As I looked around, I noticed all the bottles arranged in cabinets in his office. So I became curious and said to him, "Tell me, how do you make perfume?"

He took me down to the lab and excitedly showed me around, and I learned a whole bunch of information that would have changed everything if I had bothered to ask upfront. So, unfortunately, I didn't leave with a client, but I did go with two bottles of perfume, a slice of cherry pie that his wife had made, and a friend.



Connection is the oil that greases the wheels of progress, our sense of achievement and wellbeing. The quality and reach of our connections are a function of our ability to be known, respected, trusted and likeable.

## Know people

Immediate family aside, there was a point when we did not know everyone we know now. If we did not put ourselves in the way of opportunities to connect, we would have no friends, colleagues or acquaintances. It's natural for humans to seek connection.

The possibility for collaboration and the progress it brings starts when one party reaches out to another.

Those willing to talk with strangers are free to open up all manner of otherwise lost possibilities and potential.

The more connections we have, the more unique ideas, knowledge and perspectives we get to engage with.<sup>21</sup> It is safe to assume that we can learn something from everyone we encounter.

But many find talking to strangers (at this point, that is what they are) difficult. As children, we may have been told not to talk to strangers; it is rude to interrupt or only speak when spoken to. These patterns of avoidance can become deeply coded in our story.

One of my friend's networks with lots of high-net-worth investors and technical IT people.

Little of her life could be said to be in common with these people, and whilst she has a broad appreciation of technology, she isn't a techno-nerd. However, she has three

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<sup>21</sup> No one is cleverer than everyone after all.

questions that she uses to establish and build a connection:

1. What do you do?
2. What are you great at?
3. What are you passionate about?

These questions give her information and unearth the deeper emotional drivers of people. Whenever used, they have the potential to quickly develop a deep connection.

## Respect and Trust

These critical components of connection are primarily driven by our actions and words.

Moment to moment, we reveal our trustworthiness and our respect for others through demonstrating our honesty, integrity and desire to help. We do this through three things:

1. Honouring our commitments with others, always doing what we say we will, and not doing what we say we won't do.
2. Telling the truth, or at least not lying. Half-truths and errors of omission damage connections.
3. Showing a willingness to undertake the hard work and the difficult conversations that drive mutual progress.

We tend to make quick decisions about the trustworthiness and intentions of others.<sup>22</sup> But, unfortunately, these initial judgements are wrong more often than they are right. It takes time and mutual trials to develop genuine respect and trust for others (and, of course, for them to trust us).

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<sup>22</sup> It takes just seven seconds for us to reach an opinion on the trustworthiness, physical strength, and intentions of others.

## Likeable

We are likeable when we:

1. Are kind to others. This is not just about being ‘nice’. Empathy, not sympathy, is the hallmark of likeability.<sup>23</sup>
2. Share our time, energy, resources and attention (at a level at least reciprocal to what they have contributed to us).
3. Show a willingness to reveal our own vulnerability and honestly share our own fears and shortcomings in the spirit of mutual advantage.
4. Seek common ground as the basis from which to collaborate, influence and inspire each other.

When we seek out every opportunity to start, develop and nurture connections with others, we exponentially sharpen our own perspectives and abilities.

We place ourselves in the optimum position to achieve our own outcomes while supporting others with theirs. In addition, it enables us to begin to understand each other in helpful and valuable ways.

Remember, no one dies, and nothing is lost if someone doesn’t want to talk or connect with you.

Try it next time you are in the company of a stranger.

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<sup>23</sup> If we encounter someone stuck in quicksand, the solution is not to jump in with them but to lend a hand to pull them out.