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TELUS executive shares tips on networking

Roshena Huang

Simply mention “networking” and wait for the groans to follow. However, networking need not be a feared activity. Students can be successful in networking; like many skills, it just takes practice. Unfortunately, juggling academic commitments, extra-curricular activities, social engagements, and employment seems to leave little time to build one’s network.

Networking needs to be a priority, says **Josh Blair** at Telus. Blair makes networking a part of his day-to-day life. He suggests that students reflect on how they spend their time and prioritize accordingly. As for the fear commonly associated with the concept, Blair reminds students that they should not expect to be a networking expert overnight. He recommends getting involved in one community organization, such as **The Vancouver Board of Trade**, as a start. When students show interest by asking people about themselves, it is unlikely that anyone will shy away from discussing such a topic.

As a leader at TELUS, Blair leverages some of the relationships he has built through networking to gain buy-in when attempting to make changes within the organization. Blair ascribes his personal networking style to the philosophy of **Darcy Rezac**, managing director of The Vancouver Board of Trade, who states that “the key to networking is building positive relationships.” Rezac’s two books, *The Frog and Prince: Secrets of Positive Networking to Change Your Life* and *Work the Pond: Use the Power of Positive Networking to*

Leap Forward in Work and Life, are considered definitive guides on the topic.

Recognizing relationships as the key to business success, Blair cites some of TELUS’ networking activities. TELUS builds positive relationships in the community and within the organization by organizing events, operating programs, and participating in community initiatives. He says the company strives to be Canada’s premier corporate citizen, which is reflected in Telus’ participation in a variety of community projects, including *Team TELUS Cares* and trips to

the **Union Gospel Mission** to serve food to the less fortunate citizens of the community.

If you buy into the philosophy of networking as a means to help others, it can be both an enjoyable and fulfilling activity. So, fill your pocket with business cards and see what you can do for other people;

you just might find the connection you’re looking for! **S**

The key to networking is building positive relationships. So, fill your pocket with business cards and see what you can do for other people.

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The importance of a handshake

By *Meghan Roberts*

Any business person will tell you that a positive first impression is key—the vital aspect being a good handshake.

There are a few elements to keep in mind when shaking another's hand.

✓ **Be aware of your own hands.** Are they clammy? Dry? Remember, this may be the only physical contact you have with this person. If your hands tend to get a little clammy, consider ways of subtly assuring they are dry at the moment of the handshake.

✓ **Respond.** No matter what, you want a firm, purposeful handshake; but adjust the strength behind it to accommodate the person you are meeting.

✓ **Smile.** Smiling will immediately make the other person more comfortable while giving you an aura of friendliness and amiability.

✓ **Make Eye Contact.** Looking someone in the eye shows respect and confidence. If you avoid eye contact you may appear standoffish, rude, or shy.

Never underestimate the power of a handshake. This simple gesture is imperative in creating and maintaining a commanding first impression.

Diving in head-first – Where to start in a room full of strangers

Walking into a room full of people you do not know can be incredibly intimidating for most individuals. To tackle this challenge, all you need are a few tips and some preparation.

Start by getting comfortable with talking about yourself. A tribal introduction will be useful in these introductory phases of networking. Let the conversation flow naturally and keep the key elements of your introduction in the back of your mind. That way when ques-

tions arise, you will have something prepared.

UBC Career Services in their *Interviewing for Success* document stresses the importance of giving detailed answers and referencing personal experiences. However, they also warn to be precise and avoid nervous babble.

Asking questions will display your interest and give you useful information. If you think you may have trouble generating them on the spot, prepare some open-ended questions ahead of time.

Maintain an attitude of “what can I do for you?” instead of “what can you do for me?” UBC Career Services asserts that a negative, self-serving attitude will be poorly received.

Finally, be sure to follow up any new contacts you make with a quick e-mail or note. Your thanks will show your appreciation and willingness to keep the doors of communication open.

Resources: UBC Career Services. Interviewing for Success. 18 February 2008. http://www.students.ubc.ca/CAREERS/download/resources_interviewing.pdf



Elio Luongo, Managing Partner of KPMG Vancouver, Roundtable event

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Practice, practice, practice

Sign up for weekly networking tips at info@workthepond.com

- Bring a friend and cross-network
- Have a goal
- Give your full attention
- Do your homework
- Always follow-up



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Social networking: Professional standards for employers

By Carla Culos

Social networking has revolutionized the way individuals communicate and interact with each other and now with employers.

MySpace and **Facebook** are the most popular social networking sites that employers are using to 'get to know' their current or potential employees beyond their paper resumes.

Below are tips and guidelines for Facebook that ensure the information you share with your network and employers portrays you as accurately and objectively as desired.

Profile picture

This photo is your first impression. Choose a photo that depicts how you would like to present yourself to a stranger (or employer) for the first time.

Profile information

Remember that although employers cannot request personal information such as age, gender, religion, or political status, it may be available on your profile.

The wall

Do not post information you do not want seen by third parties.

Response time

Facebook is not meant for instant communication. If you intend to use Facebook for professional purposes, reply quickly.

Posting Photo Albums

Filter, filter, filter. \$

Why we network

By Varun Chandran

A social network is composed of individuals or organizations that are linked by interdependencies that stretch from values, ideas, financial exchange, friendships, conflict, trade, and many others. According to political scientist **Robert Putnam**, "social capital" refers to the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. Thus, networking serves as a bridge to bolster the collective value we as



David Poole, Senior Vice President, BC & Yukon, Scotiabank

humans derive from our societal interactions.

We network for numerous reasons, but on a fundamental basis our reasoning involves our desire to sustain ties within our extended communities. Our networking serves to establish personal goals in a community and functions as a pivotal element in Western economies. We, as students, are at an infant stage in these established communities, and should make a concentrated effort in defining our social position. \$

Networking jitters

By Nicholas Ilyin

Many students and aspiring young professionals really have what it takes to be the next top realtor, CEO, or investor, but most of these young talents cringe at the thought of networking. Getting out into a crowd of professionals and producing effective conversations can be stressful. But fear not, for there are ways of getting over this apprehension and starting to impress and engage the people you meet.

Practice and more practice

There is no better way to improve at something than to practice. Start attending every possible event that you can, such as **Vancouver Board of Trade** events, professional career fairs, and school functions. At first you may think that there is no-one "useful" for you to meet, but without the pressure of being surrounded by CEOs, you will be more natural at meeting strangers and starting conversations with them. As you go through several events, your fears will fade away and networking will be second nature to you.

Getting out into a crowd of professionals and producing effective conversations can be stressful.

Overcome fear of rejection

One of the most common reasons why you will not approach someone is the fear of being rejected. The fact is that it will happen, but how you deal with it makes you either soar with confidence, or go home at the end of the day feeling left out. Building confidence and knowing that rejection may happen—but not letting it affect you—will show immense confidence in your style which will lead to having an impact on those you network with.

Focus

Focus on a purpose. If you think that you are networking to sell something—namely your talents to some major company—then you are mistaken. That approach almost never works. You will have much more success if you focus on making contacts with the thought of how you are going to help them.

Practicing, building confidence against fear of rejection, and focusing on what you can do for those that you meet will have you networking like a professional in no time. \$

Lise Boullard's Networking Log Sheet

January 15 to February 23

By Lise Boullard

- ✓ Attended Speednetworking event at Caprice and exchanged business cards with 20 people.
- ✓ February 11th: Attended Spirit of Vancouver Countdown to 2010 event and met one person at my table.
- ✓ At SFU I did a presentation to a panel of three judges (all magazine professionals) and had a half-hour conversation and exchanged business cards with one of them.
- ✓ On February 12, I did a 15-minute interview with Donna Messer (networking expert from **ConnectUs Communications Canada**). I told her about my career goals and she sent me an email inviting me to contact her if I am ever looking for work in magazines.
- ✓ I had a telephone conversation with the editor at **Nuvo** magazine and told him about the publishing program I was involved with.
- ✓ I did a 15-minute interview with the creative director of **Smak** for the YoungLeader newsletter and he told me to call him anytime if I need anything more.
- ✓ I have been building stronger and stronger relationships with my professors in the Master of Publishing Program at SFU, who are all magazine and book publishing professionals.
- ✓ I applied to do an internship over the summer at **Reader's Digest** in Montreal and I was offered a position.
- ✓ February 21, attended Manager's Toolbox – The Leader as a Coach: Leading with Backbone and Heart and exchanged two business cards.

Network from existing contacts

By George Wogiatzis

In the busy life of an aspiring business leader it can seem difficult to find the time to do enough networking. While networking events are important to attend as a young leader, we should also be building a solid foundation of contacts within our existing network.

It is easy to neglect the vast amount of contacts already available to us. The good news is that it is also easy to tap into this amazing resource! I will share with you a method which works well for me. First determine what your goal is for networking, and base the networking "search" on this. Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it into individual sections, divide sections by the type of contact that you will be utilizing; the sections that I used were immediate family, extended family, friends, classmates, professors, and existing business contacts. Then brainstorm all the networking contacts that can be extracted from each section.


Armed with this information all it takes is a little ground work. Make a game plan and start talking to your existing contacts, let them know what you are doing, and see if they can help arrange a meeting between you and a desired contact. Often times, this research will lead to even more possibilities. Get networking; there is a world of opportunity right in front of you! 



Photo by Steve Bell-Irving



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