

The inescapable value of sustainable business relationships

While I owe any business development success I have to networking and am an enthusiastic proponent of anything involving electronic/Internet communication, I just do not have the physical, emotional or intellectual resources to drive content on, or respond to, the hundreds of contacts on Twitter, FaceBook or Linked-In with any meaningful depth.

Entering relevant stuff with any regularity on my two blogs long ago became an impossibility. Adequately answering, filing and taking action on daily e-mails remains a constant headache.

I know others in the business world are equally overwhelmed. The furious evolution of Internet technology that includes e-mail (that fewer and fewer people seem to read or answer), interactive websites, *MySpace*, *YouTube* and now social networking as critical business tools has had people frantically playing technology *catch-up* rather than concentrating on their true purpose—building viable business relationships.

This phenomenon has perhaps less to do with technology than with the inherent desire we have to ape the creativity that has worked for others... to download winning formulas for success. Easy and cheap communication tools have third-rate marketers appealing to fourth-rate consumers to join a communication vortex leading to nowhere.

Have we individually evaluated the net worth of social networking? Who has time or energy to respond to hastily-written, context-lacking drivel that crams our assorted in-boxes and home pages? Are we really able to read, digest and participate in the myriad tawdry blogs, many abandoned after an entry or two? Have we time to scan *YouTube/My Space* for interesting and relevant videos/messages hidden amid the thousands posted daily? Do we not sit back and allow others to do the sifting for us, waiting for the thousands of gigabytes forwarded electronically every day?

The *networkable* have long since taken cover, virtually and in real time. They

simply refuse to engage in networking events that appear to have become the exclusive meeting place of entitled *bottom-feeders*.

Seriously though, if networking protagonists continue to exhort the masses to go forth and network, blog, Twitter, Link-In., FaceBook, etc. where can the advantage possibly lie? How many groups within groups can we join? How many people/group updates do we have the daily capacity to scan/monitor/access/notate? Is this relationship-building? Sure, we will be busy but will we have time left over to actually do a day's work?

To illustrate the danger of potentially shallow Internet relationships, I thought to mention a speaker at a recent conference who droned on about "Internet presence" as the only way to establish a true "personal brand". This speaker breathlessly touted the exciting news that for the price of a single book, anyone can write a critique on any book featured on the Amazon site. This would "give great Google exposure". Imagine if audiences around the world followed her advice! Writing critiques to create an Internet identity that would in turn build a personal brand.

Then we have to listen to this nonsense dished up as the "beauty of peer evaluation".

It is almost as if the whole business world is about to degenerate into a massive *American Idol* operation. Much ado about nothing. Is this the cynical outlook of a Luddite who cannot evolve with the times, or is it a reflection of the belief that a successful business demands meaningful and constant relationships?

I remain in awe of the magnificence of individual thinking and its power to enhance the good of the greater community. Those that share this enthusiasm understand that the recognition, understanding and accommodation of the like-minded underscores the furtherance of good business relationships. This would include the capacity to absorb originality, creativity and the courage to implement far reaching vision. Such relationships



would:

- Evolve/change with the passage of time, requiring the willingness to constantly re-evaluate relationship objectives
- Require generosity and openness of spirit
- Engender mutual trust that, once broken, can seldom be repaired.

I cannot but remember reading somewhere more than 20 years ago that a good business relationship will be the result of having:

- Inspired liking
- Inspired respect
- Inspired an awareness of/confidence in professional expertise
- Indicated availability for follow up/easy access.

Rather than a *butterfly type* approach, the pursuit of meaningful relationships that drive profitable and enjoyable business interaction would be a good focus as we navigate the miasma of social-networking venues.

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