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Build your Relationships NOT your Rolodex!

Rita's Career Corner ...With Rita B. Allen

Do you invest the proper amount of time, effort and energy in developing and nurturing relationships at work – both internally within your organization and externally within your field?

As we all do more with less, and barely have enough time and resources to accomplish expected "deliverables", your answer to this question is likely to be "not as much time as I would like". Have you stopped to think about the cost of not investing in these relationships –such as missed opportunities, underdeveloped resources, unidentified trends, lack of visibility, untapped possibilities, and/or friendships and partnerships that were not enabled to be established.

Throughout our careers, it is our relationships that will preserve our livelihood as much as our professional capabilities. In order to navigate through the peaks and valleys in the course of our professional lives, it is invaluable to build and nurture sustaining, long-lasting relationships with our network of colleagues. In fact, our ability to do so can make or break our career.

We should not confuse collecting several business cards and building our rolodex, as we used to call it, with building relationships. It's not the number of contacts or friends we have on LinkedIn or Facebook that measures our success, it is the quality of those relationships that makes the difference. So, how do we begin to do this?

Many people find the notion of building relationships to be

overwhelming and intimidating especially when they are working so hard to keep up with their daily responsibilities. These feelings are unnecessary and consume energy rather than energizing you in a positive and productive manner.

Try these three easy steps to start unleashing your potential and embrace the concept of relationship building as user-friendly and vital to managing your career.

Keep it real! Be authentic, sincere and genuine:

- **Step 1: Get to Know your Contacts and their Needs** – what are your commonalities, similarities and differences? Reveal yourself, find shared interests as well as ways to compliment and balance one another; initiate ways to assist each other address needs, concerns and challenges
- **Step 2: Listen Actively** – engage in a dialogue; show genuine interest in helping and being a resource to others; start a two-way conversation and keep it going; listening more than speaking always leads to attentive comprehension as well as effective and satisfying results
- **Step 3: Offer Your Time and Expertise** – Extend yourself, your knowledge and your contacts as appropriate; offer to help in a variety of ways without asking for or expecting anything in return; act in ways that truly exhibit your passion and values; exercise the “golden rule”, common courtesy and professional etiquette

Ask Rita...

Question: I lost touch with colleagues from my old job and would like to reconnect with them, but I feel awkward. I genuinely like them, but I'm concerned they will think I'm using them to advance my career. How do I reach out to them without seeming insincere?

Answer: It sounds like you had a strong connection with these colleagues which is the foundation you want to continue to build.

What's holding you back from reaching out – the awkwardness of not having talked in some time?

First, change your mind-set to one of opportunity by embracing this as an opportunity to reconnect with key people that have helped you be successful in your career and whom you have likely helped as well. Begin with a phone call or email initiating contact that shows genuine and sincere interest in them. What have they been up to, where are they working, what are some milestones that have occurred? You can suggest meeting over coffee, lunch or dinner and will likely be greeted with enthusiastic response. Give it a try starting with 1 or 2 people you feel really comfortable. Take baby steps and build up your comfort and confidence. Each time you can try a different strategy such as meeting at an industry event, hosting a meeting at your office and/or connecting through LinkedIn followed by a long telephone call. The point is don't be afraid to make the first move and initiate contact – and do so in your own way!

Good luck and have fun with it!

ASK QUESTIONS HERE!:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGQ1cmwyTW96UDIXTFRud0xjLWZVWIE6MQ>

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