



Networking, Part 1

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As we develop our careers, it is increasingly important to manage a set of contacts that become a part of our networks. Remember that for job-seekers, it is often not just what you know, but whom you know as well. Taking that a step further, it can also be not only whom you know, but whom they know as well.

Let's make a list of all the people that can help you in your career. It is not necessary to use specific names; for this exercise we will use positions to indicate areas wherein to develop contacts.

- Fellow superintendents
- Former employers
- General managers
- Golf professionals
- Golf association (local) staff
- Local distributors
- Manufacturers' representatives
- Educators
- Researchers
- USGA agronomists
- Media
- Golfers
- Neighbors
- Relatives
- Former classmates
- Alumni from your school
- Seminar instructors
- Golf course architects
- Consultants
- Headhunters
- Regional agronomists for management companies
- GCSAA staff

Now that you have a list of potential network opportunities, it is time to develop a strategy to build and cultivate relationships with as many people as you can.

I will try to provide a few tips that I have learned, over the years, that may help you cast a wider net in developing relationships.

Business Cards

Be certain to have professional business cards with you at all times.

Keep your information current. The greatest value is not handing out your business cards but in exchanging them to develop new contacts. The exchange of business cards alone will not ensure the memory of your encounter. Follow up with an e-mail or a note to set you apart from the crowd.

Working the Room

Set a goal of making a certain number of contacts at any meeting or function you attend. If there are 100 people at a meeting, it is reasonable to assume that you might walk away with five to 10 new contacts depending on the type of function. Target people that are leaders or influential in the industry. Most people are not interested in talking to you for half an hour but surely will give you three to five minutes of their time.

The Elevator Speech

A long time ago, I had a mentor who taught me about the "elevator speech." He related that if you got on an elevator and were going up five floors, what would you say in that short timeframe to sell yourself to someone? We should all have a speech, prepared in advance, that would allow us to make a connection with anyone. When someone says hello and asks what you do for a living . . . you should have a quick reply that would be interesting and memorable. Although I call this an "elevator speech," it is more applicable at social functions, out on the golf course, in the locker room, etc. When

introduced to members or guests at my golf course, I like to reply, "Hi, my name is Bruce Williams, the golf course superintendent here, and I hope that I make your game more enjoyable with the conditions that you see today." This usually leads to further conversation. The goal is to make a lasting impression.

Six Degrees of Separation

In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell talks about the origin of the above-named phenomenon. He describes how a large group of people ultimately become connected to one another by just a few, surprisingly connected individuals who provide a common link. Gladwell talks about how there are pivotal people in any network of connected individuals who know a lot of other people. Connect with those who are connected.

When I meet people, I try to find out what we have in common. It is amazing that I rarely find someone with whom I have nothing in common. Usually we are familiar with a certain golf course, city, individual, hobby or something else. Without probing, you can ask a few questions to find common ground and expand into those areas of mutual interest.



Next issue: More networking dos and don'ts.