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SH*T JONESY SAYS

I just shipped my oldest son off to college. I was tapped out when it came to getting him any kind of a fancy special gift to commemorate this important transition in his life. So, I got creative and decided to give him a little of “me” instead.

I sat down and wrote out a list of sayings and advice on a single sheet of paper and titled it, “Sh*t My Dad Says...” I thought of all the things I’d say to him as he faces challenges every day and has to begin to live independently. I put it in a cheap frame and gave it to him to put in his tiny dorm room. Mike eyed the thing but hung it over his desk and promised he would glance at it occasionally.

Here are a few of the tidbits I offered my son as he begins his college career — and takes his first steps toward the real world:

- Make good choices. You know what’s right.
- Eat the elephant one bite at a time.
- Make a to-do list every morning. Update it every night.
- Stand by your beliefs and support them with facts.
- Don’t procrastinate! Do it now!
- Always be honest. The truth will set you free.
- Don’t hide bad news... it just gets worse.

I realized later there was another piece of advice I should have included: *Make networking a priority every day.*

At 18, networking is largely about Facebook friends and reconnecting with high school buddies for a beer. By your mid-20s, networking is often the difference between a stagnant career and a dynamic one. In middle age, networking is quite simply critical to survival — particularly in economic times like those we live in today.

Here’s how it should work for you:

GEARING UP. Establishing yourself on the first rung of the ladder is tough these days. Good assistant’s positions do not grow on trees anymore. So, you need a network of folks who can offer advice and keep their ear to the ground for you. Try this approach:

- **Fearsome Foursome.** Pick four leading supers you met during school or who are studs in your area. Set up a 45-minute meeting with each of them to pick their brains and tell them how much you admire them. Butter them up like an Eggo waffle before asking them to be one of your mentors. They LOVE being mentors.

Keep in touch with an e-mail every six weeks or so or forward them an

“I’m an innovator and a top professional and you should recommend me for available positions.” You can be candid and share insights about what you’re doing at your facility and you can also be far more technical than you’d ever be on your “public blog.”

ESTABLISHED PRO. At this stage, you’ve reached near to the top of the ladder but you’re wondering about your job security due to financial woes at the club, a new boss or some other wildcard.

The key is to be in touch with the top people in the industry who are likely to be in the loop when those six-figure jobs open up anywhere in the country.

- **Rolodex Roulette.** Build a “ticker” list in whatever calendar software you use to have a planned, strategic

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interesting article or blog post. Make sure to communicate in the English language instead of “txt spk.” All it takes is a little “touch” every once in a while to keep yourself top of mind with these busy but connected leaders.

RISING STAR. You’re halfway up the ladder but perhaps stalled in an assistant’s position in the toughest job market in decades. Try this:

- **The Secret Blog.** A maintenance blog is nearly required these days for those who want to be seen as effective communicators with members/golfers, but a growing number have secondary blogs to communicate about their practices and professionalism to colleagues and potential employers. The theme of your “secret blog” should be,

approach to keep in touch with potential allies if you need to make a job change. These might be superintendents, consultants, industry people... even media clowns like me. All you’re doing is getting in touch on a regular basis and keeping the lines of communication open with these folks.

Spin the wheel on a regular basis and you’re only making a few calls every month, but the impact will be huge when one of them keeps you in mind for a great new job.

So, perhaps you too will decide to frame this advice and hang it in front of your desk to remind you of the value of networking.

Better yet, pick a few tidbits and use them now. It’s never too early or too late to work on your network. **GCI**