

# McHugh & Novak

## Networking Tips and Techniques

By

**John B. McHugh and Liz Novak**

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Networking is part art and part science. Even the most introverted and reticent networkers can find value in new connections. Every time you meet a like-minded person in a professional networking setting you will learn something new and be inspired to be an even better version of yourself. Growing your “posse” of interesting and relevant contacts may also prove valuable to you in the future. -- *Pam Boiros, Bridge Marketing*

### **Networking Your Way to Success**

“Networking Your Way to Success” (N-2) was our introductory paper on the vital topic of networking. In it, we discussed what networking is, why networking is important to you and your career and a little about antitrust and networking. That essay set the stage for this second, more granular, look at networking. You’ll learn tips on how to network, what to do and not to do, and successful methods of networking.

Before getting to the specifics of networking, let’s start with a working definition of networking. In our first essay, “Networking Your Way to Success,” we defined networking as:

the human connection between people for their mutual benefit. Networking is based on the premise that anything good, beneficial, important, or life-changing in your professional life is

based on your personal connections with the right people.

### **Networking Dos and Don’ts**

We will provide you with a number of tips that have worked for us over the years and invite you to adopt what works for you and discard the rest. After all, no one template exists for successful networking; it’s a matter of personal preference, style, and your own uniqueness. Most of these tips are for the phone but also can be appropriate for in-person networking.

*Opening Greeting* Think about the obnoxious phone solicitations you receive that open with “How are you today, Ms. Novak?” Caller ID says “Sam the Scam of the Police Officer Widow’s Charity.” Huh? That is a turn off from a complete stranger. Rather, start with your name and the purpose of your call. Be quick and brief. For example, “My name is Jack McHugh and Liz Novak told me you could tell me about an open position in your organization. I just need five minutes.” State your business and avoid small talk. However, let the person decide if he/she has time. Don’t be pushy or rude. Expect some rejection. However, I have learned that the majority of people will help if they have the time and if you immediately state your business. The more you ask, the easier the (relatively few) rejections you receive will be to handle. You

might be surprised by the help you are able to get, simply by asking. If there is a rejection, depending on how the call has gone up to that point (that is, if it's been cordial), it might be worth asking why they won't help. You might get another, better lead just from that simple question.

Back to basics, remember the beauty of having a large and active network is that if one call doesn't work out, there are always more to make. Keep in mind one thing: Just ask!

*Be Authentic* This sounds like mundane advice, but many of us forget this. When you are networking you're attempting to connect with a fellow human. To do so successfully, you have to be yourself. In person or on the phone, if you are being a phony or condescending, the other person will spot it and immediately turn off from you and the conversation. We're all marketed to from the time we wake up in the morning until we go to sleep at night, so a genuine, honest, real connection with another person is a rare, wonderful, refreshing break from the pitches we hear the rest of the time. Be you, be real. Revel in your uniqueness and those around you will appreciate it. In those rare occasions where your uniqueness isn't appreciated—well, it's better you learn that now than invest time and energy in what isn't a great fit (whether it's a personal connection or a job).

*Be Polite* If you are contacting someone, especially based on a referral from someone else, be polite and tactful. Remember you are intruding on someone's time. Never be pushy. If the person doesn't have time now, find out what would be a good time. If the person simply doesn't have the time or won't make the time, move on to the next call. Again, if you've developed your network, you'll have plenty of other people to call.

*Listen* "God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason." Listen actively and attentively. Strive to listen more and talk less. Adopt the 30-

second rule; strive to talk no more than 30 seconds. After that, stop talking and listen. Ask questions for clarification. Repeat what you thought you heard. Summarize succinctly the conversation. This not only avoids confusion later on, it's a compliment to the other person in the conversation. You are showing them that you value their comments so much that you have absorbed and processed them. Active listening is a rare and wonderful thing. Try it!

*Be Empathic* If you are taking a call from an unemployed person on the job market, before telling them you are too busy to talk, stop a minute and think: "Maybe that will be me next year." The reality of the work place is that you never know about your job security. If you take 10 to 15 minutes to listen and make some suggestions, your caller will be greatly appreciative and much more likely to help you out if you ever need help. Like most people, we have been between jobs and looking so we know of what we speak. We remember fondly those who have tried to help us and likewise remember those who were rude and gave us a hard time.

*Take and Keep Notes* Start a database with annotated notes on key networking contacts. These notes should be confidential, namely, your honest impressions of the person and how he/she could help you and how you helped that person. Be succinct. And, yes, record those who you want to avoid; for example, those who are rude or give you a negative feeling. Maintain these notes in a secure place. Never keep them in your office.

*Be Courteous and Gracious* Always thank the person who has given you his/her time and maybe a solid lead or some useful advice. Common courtesy goes a long way. Here's an example when Jack was impressed by a courteous networker and the mutually beneficial relationship that developed as a result of one networker who understood the power of graciousness:

“Years ago I received a call from an editor inquiring if I had any freelance work. She was referred to me by a friend who had done some editing for me. I didn’t have any editing work at that time but we chatted and exchanged emails, in which she always thanked me for my time and advice. A few years later, I received an email from this editor asking for some career advice. We talked and I sent her a few items of interest and suggested some contacts for jobs. A few days later I received a beautiful card with a hand written thank you note. We stayed in touch and about a year later she wanted my advice on an exceptional job she was pursuing. I coached her and made a few suggestions. She got the job. About a week later I received another hand written thank you note and \$50 Amazon gift certificate. My editor friend forever imprinted my memory with her graciousness. Over the years we have developed a mutually beneficial professional relationship and a personal friendship.”

### **Networking Compounds Like Interest**

Networking is a lot like saving money and earning compound interest. The compounding of interest adds up over the years. The same happens with our networking efforts; over the years, each contact grows more valuable. In our professional/business lives we recognize that every positive event has been the result of our connection to someone who could help us out or make a decision that moved us forward. Much of life’s success is about being in the right place at the right time, knowing the right people, and being prepared and diligent.

### **Birds of a Feather Flock Together**

One of the best opportunities to flex your networking muscle is to get connected with a local networking group. There are many groups available, depending upon your current profession, desired profession, industry, and other interests. These groups are often hiding in plain sight. Review newsletters from your local

library or professional associations. Scour the bulletin boards at your local coffee shop to see which groups meet there and when. Use online platforms like MeetUp and EventBright to find interesting groups. Or start your own! Get a couple of other folks and ask them to bring one or two other interested (and interesting!) people to a meeting at a convenient time at a local, public location. You can grow your group over time as you begin to coalesce.

### **Go Forth and Network**

We hope these tips have given you a few good techniques to add to your networking repertoire. Although we used job hunting frequently as an example for ways to use these techniques, it’s also important to reach out to your network when you don’t need anything. We know of some master networkers who set a few hours aside each week to call people they haven’t talked to in several months to see what’s going on with them. If you have a concentration of Millennials in your network, a better option would be to reach out to them via social media or text message. Simply sharing a link on a topic you know is of interest to them and saying hello is a great way to let them know you are thinking about them. And if you want to get really old school, send a card or note via snail mail. It’s always a nice, refreshing surprise to receive a handwritten, personalized note in the mail. This is a thoughtful way for you to let your network know that you value their presence in your life.

### **What’s Next in the McHugh/Novak Networking Series**

In the next article, you will learn about networking vehicles such as phone, email, in person, and social media and networking venues such as at conferences, in your office, your neighborhood, suppliers and competitors, associations (trade, professional, and technical societies).

## **About Our Reviewer Pam Boiros**

Pam began her career in publishing working for Butterworth-Heinemann, a division of the global STM publisher Elsevier. She held various sales and marketing roles from 1993-2000, including Director of North American sales. In June 2000 she pivoted to digital publishing with eBook pioneer Books24x7. During the next 12 years, focused on the Book24x7 product line, she handled product management and marketing as well as publisher relations. Books24x7 was acquired by Skillsoft, and Pam served as Vice President, Global Corporate Marketing at Skillsoft from 2012-2016. Pam is currently the principal and owner of Bridge Marketing Advisors, a firm specializing in strategic marketing planning. She holds an undergraduate degree from Northeastern University (Boston, MA) and an MBA from Babson College (Wellesley, MA).

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### **Also of Interest at**

[http://www.johnbmchugh.com/free\\_pub\\_guides4.htm](http://www.johnbmchugh.com/free_pub_guides4.htm)

N-2, *Networking Your Way to Success*, 2016, 2 pages (Co-Author Liz Novak)

Provides a short introduction to networking and why it is important to you and your career to network.

## **About John B. McHugh and Liz Novak**

### **John B. McHugh**

John B. "Jack" McHugh is a 40-year veteran of the publishing business. Jack has worked as an executive for Houghton Mifflin, Wadsworth, and

Saint Mary's Press. Jack is also an experienced association publishing executive. For seven years, he was Publisher and Director of Programs at the American Society for Quality and for a two-year period, he served as the Interim Publisher at the Project Management Institute. He is a member of the ASAE Advisory Board for Publishing, Communications, and Media Issues and Practices.

Jack's specialties include association/nonprofit publishing, book publishing, executive recruiting, journal publishing, rights and permissions, new ventures, organizational design, and social media strategy and policy.

McHugh and Liz Novak, of IAPD, are co-authoring a series of papers on **Networking Techniques**. Jack McHugh is also the manager of two LinkedIn™ groups, **Association and Nonprofit Publishing** and **The Self-Employment Forum**.

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### **Liz Novak, MBA, CAE**

Liz Novak began her publishing career in the early 1990s at *PC Magazine*. After enjoying 17 years as a magazine editor for various technical magazines, and seeing the impact of the internet on the publishing industry, she returned to school and earned her MBA. After graduation, her freshly minted MBA landed her a job as magazine editor for the flagship publication of the International Association of Plastics Distribution (IAPD). Six months into the job, she added Marketing Director to her title and has relished the opportunities that combining the association's publishing and marketing departments have afforded her. Contact: [www.linkedin.com/in/lnovak](http://www.linkedin.com/in/lnovak).

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