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The power of networking

According to the oxford advanced dictionary ” Networking” can be defined as the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts. Networking has long been recognized as a powerful tool for business people and professionals. Knowing more people gives you greater access, facilitates the sharing of information, and makes it easier to influence others for the simple reason that influencing people you know is easier than influencing strangers.

Networking is a matter of creating useful linkages, both within and among communities, organizations, and societies, in order to mobilize resources and achieve various goals. One author describes it as the "art of building alliances."

Networking occurs at a variety of levels. At the level of neighborhoods and communities, it is a matter of creating reciprocal relationships with other members of society. In many instances, parties meet informally to share a meal or hold a casual meeting. They often share resources, contacts, and information with one another. As a result of these conversations and newly found connections, individuals often find jobs and freelance work, locate apartments, trade services, and develop cooperative strategies.

Some common examples of networking activities include attending trade or professional association meetings, volunteering for community work, visiting with other members of one's social clubs or religious groups, posting messages on mailing lists, and talking to other people in one's community. Networking contacts are often found through friends, extended family, alumni associations, former bosses, and members of the various clubs, religious groups, or other organizations to which one belongs.

Many professionals have increasingly relied on Internet chat rooms, networking websites, and online forums to discuss recent developments in their occupation or field and ask questions of each other. Those looking for employment typically find that networking is one of the most effective ways to find a job. In many villages in less developed parts of the world, establishing social contacts is important for individuals who need to locate money and resources or seek information about where seasonal workers are needed. Networking also allows individuals in many countries to form groups so that they may qualify for loans from banks. Networking is also an important component of community organising. This requires that diverse members of the population build relationships, share resources, and work together in an organized way for social change. Networking can occur among members of a single organization or social group, among people from many different communities and identity groups, and among organizations. It is a matter of forging connections with other individuals or groups who face similar problems and issues and want to work together toward solutions. These social connections allow individuals, groups, and organizations to find allies, access tools, share practical wisdom, and build collaborative strategies. Networking thus helps those working for social change to share resources and information, devise an agenda, and engage in collective action within their society. For example, local activists and those working in the field of peacemaking will find it useful to make contact with other grassroots organizers to coordinate efforts, learn what has already been done on the issue, and discuss what has and has not worked. Likewise, it is important for organizations to make contacts with other agencies, groups, and individuals that might support their work in direct or indirect ways.

Like coalition building, networking is grounded in the notion that people who pool their resources have a greater ability to advance their interests. Connections formed through networking can be useful in broadening the research and knowledge base of social campaigns and generating new resources and backing for their efforts. Establishing alliances also makes it easier for organizations to gain help from support groups and allies who support their goals. Insofar as those who coordinate their activities and share resources have a greater chance of success, networking often empowers groups and helps to give people a real voice in decisions that affect them. Through networking, individuals also may develop relationships with third party neutrals as well as adversaries, which ultimately may make it easier for them to come to some sort of agreement in current or future disputes.

Active networking is vital to career growth. Often confused with selling, networking is actually about building long-term relationships and a good reputation over time. It involves meeting and getting to know people who you can assist, and who can potentially help you in return.

Your network includes everyone from friends and family to work colleagues, business connections, your social network and members of groups to which you belong.

Networking is about sharing, not taking. It is about forming trust and helping one another toward goals. Regularly engaging with your contacts and finding opportunities to assist them helps to strengthen the relationship. By doing this, you sow the seeds for reciprocal assistance when you need help to achieve your goals.

Unfortunately, along with its many advantages, networking does present some drawbacks that need to be addressed if it is to remain a positive rather than a negative influence.

Not all networking leads to successful business relationships. For every networked contact that develops into a mutually beneficial transaction, there are many others that lead nowhere. Because of this, the resources that are used in networking, including management and employee hours, computer equipment and telephone bills, need to be taken into account in their totality when determining the net value of networking. Discrimination when determining which contacts are worth pursuing can greatly reduce the percentage of wasted resources that are involved in networking activities.

In the world of business, time is indeed money. The cultivation of network contacts within your own company and throughout the business world requires a great deal of time, particularly when it involves personal relationships, socializing and the development of interpersonal trust. Unlike the world outside of business, all of these things need to be weighed against their profitability and usefulness for the success of the company. In many cases, networking is transformed into mere socializing and ends up doing little to promote either the business objectives of management or the job security of employees.

Social networking sites have become a dominant force on the Internet. For managers of workplaces in which employees have access to the Internet, this can become a potential problem. Particularly in cases where employees are unmotivated and lack a commitment to the work they are doing for the company, personal networking objectives may take precedence over work responsibilities. Unfortunately, there is no simple solution to this problem since the Internet has become so central to business activities, and a company would be crippled if it denied its employees online access.

While most businesses can benefit from close relationships with other businesses, these interactions are not always purely beneficial. If you employ individuals who are less than satisfied with your working conditions, remuneration or other elements of your workplace, they may be lured away by your competition. The more networking that is engaged in by business owners and their employees, the more opportunity there is for this type of inter-corporate employee piracy. This is not to say that cutting off relationships with other businesses is desirable or even possible, only that both the benefits and the potential drawbacks should be kept in mind.

In many fields of business, networking is the new buzzword. Managers and business consultants who become too enamored with this idea may begin to claim that networking is the solution for all ills when it comes to business and employee relations.

Other disadvantages may include : It lacks independence.

it poses security difficulties.

It lacks robustness.

It allows for more presence of computer viruses and malware.

Its light policing usage promotes negative acts.

It requires an efficient handler.

It requires an expensive set-up.