

Contacting people effectively (with help)

You may have great aspirations for business development and even a wonderful strategy. But successfully carrying out that strategy requires hard work. On some parts of your plan, you can ease the burden with a system, and if possible, some help.

Staying in touch

You may struggle to stay in touch with ex-clients and other network members because you are too busy. How about setting aside a few days each quarter to do nothing but talk with these people? Here's an approach:

- Have an assistant (or even someone you hire through a service like TaskRabbit) contact people on your list. Have the assistant tell them that you are hoping to talk with them, that you have time on each of these few days, and that you'd like to schedule a time in order to maximize the chance of actually getting to talk. The assistant can follow up, call back and be more persistent in making the appointment than you can realistically be. Then talk as scheduled.
- Follow up with people who cannot be scheduled with an email saying that you'd love to find a time that would work for them or at least hear back via email on how they are doing. Even if there's no response, the contact is good to have.

Meeting new people

The same approach can be used in meeting new people. A management consultant who moved to a new market to open an office for his firm executed an outstanding version of this approach. He hired an assistant and provided four lists of people:

- A players - such as CEO's of target companies
- B players - such as executives of target companies
- C players - such as people who had good contacts in target companies
- D players - such as anyone who worked at target companies

He told the assistant that he wanted to have breakfast and lunch every day with someone from the local business community. He instructed the assistant to call A players and try to get appointments. He told the assistant that if he had an opening within the coming three weeks, then she should try to fill

with B players. If he had an opening within the coming week, then see if a C player was available. And for the next day or two, try for a D player.

The assistant was able to fill his schedule and as he got to be known (by B, C and D players) he eventually was able to see A players as well. He acquired immense knowledge about who was who and who was doing what, and quickly became a go-to person to understand and stay up to date on the local community. He also picked up quite a few clients.

What to do this week

Decide if staying in touch or meeting new people is more important to your plan for the year. Strategize about how to get some help in organizing whatever is most important. Use the ideas above as inspiration for something that will work for you, and pursue it intensely.

What are these tips?

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