YOUR GLOBAL NETWORKING PLAYBOOK
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevate Your Networking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Networking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking: The Global Difference</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 New Ways to Be a Better Global Player</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network with the Chazen Institute</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ELEVATE YOUR NETWORKING

Try these 6 ways to inject new energy into your business relationships.
Now is as good a time as any to take stock of your career. If your upward momentum has slowed (or stopped), it might be time to re-energize your networking efforts.

1. SAY “SO LONG” TO SHYNESS.
“In advance of calling or meeting someone, get pumped!,” suggests Juan Gomez Vega ’09, head of capital markets and investor relations for Neinor Homes. “Before important phone calls, I stand and smile for a full minute, which makes me feel confident. Listen to music or watch a movie scene that inspires you. Personally, I watch Al Pacino’s pivotal speech in the 1999 football movie Any Given Sunday.”

2. THINK BEYOND GOOGLE.
Use LinkedIn with the School’s alumni database. First, visit linkedin.com to find other Columbia Business School graduates. Then, go to the Business School’s alumni page (gsb.columbia.edu/alumni) and sign in to the directory (bit.ly/alumni-directory). Visit websites of companies you want to work for and read bios to find Columbia Business School alumni.
3. TRY “IDEA NETWORKING.”

William Duggan, senior lecturer in business and a Chazen Senior Scholar, is a proponent of “idea networking.”

First, come up with a question that matches your passion. For example, “Is there private equity in Brazil? And how does it work?” Or: “Are there any areas of print publishing that are growing?”

These “idea questions” are very different from another traditional networking technique: the informational interview. That’s where you ask to speak to someone in a company not about a specific job but about working there more generally.

To get started with idea networking, you need only one person to reach out to. Contact that person by email, phone, or in person. Introduce yourself, then ask: would they mind if you ask for their thoughts on a question? If the question is interesting enough, they almost always say yes. At the end of your discussion, ask, “Is there anyone you suggest I talk to more about this?” If someone asks why you’re interested in the topic, do not say, “Because I want a job in that field.” Instead, say why you find the subject interesting and mention that you might want to work in that field at some point.
4. MAKE IT FACE-TO-FACE.
Ask your contacts to meet at their office or ask them out for coffee, suggests Vega. Meeting at the office can give you a sense of whether you’d be a good fit there; meeting in a café can be a good way to develop rapport.

“In January 2010, I moved to London without a job and began networking; I was drinking about eight coffees a day!” he says. “Within two months I received offers from multiple real estate private equity funds.” How did he do it? His strategy: “Prepare thoughtful questions. When

“Meeting at the office can give you a sense of whether you’d be a good fit there; meeting in a café can be a good way to develop rapport.”

– Juan Gomez Vega ’09, head of capital markets and investor relations at Neinor Homes
you’re there, ask for advice, show your industry knowledge, and demonstrate interest in the person. Don’t ask for a job or hand over your résumé unless asked. A coffee meeting is about building long-term relationships. If it’s going well, ask for introductions to other potential contacts.”

5. TAKE YOUR TIME.
If you’re trying to make connections in Asia, you won’t do it overnight—or remotely. “Networking is done face-to-face in Asia so that we can get a sense of that person,” notes Natalie Chan, Human Resources Business Partner with FrieslandCampina in Singapore. “It’s a culture thing. We take things slower. In Asia, it is important to take one’s time to develop the relationship and show how you can add value to the business.”

6. TRACK YOUR PROGRESS.
“I like to put everything in an Excel sheet,” says Vega. “Mine contained notes from my coffee meetings, as well as how much time I had devoted each day to networking. Find what works best for you, but the idea is basic: you need to hold yourself accountable. Think of networking as having another job; it is not something you can do in your free time.”
Forging connections is crucial to a successful career. Why, then, does it feel so superficial? Professor Sheena Iyengar offers tips for working a room like a pro.
In the era that spawned the term “truthiness,” it can be tough to discern what, and who, is authentic.

It’s a dilemma that seeps into nearly every corner of society. Why was Donald Trump perceived as more authentic than Hillary Clinton by many voters? If you’re speed-dating, how candid should you be with prospective partners? And, closer to home for many businesspeople, why do networking events feel so forced?

Sheena Iyengar, the S.T. Lee Professor of Business and a Chazen Senior Scholar, is digging through questions like these in several current research projects.

“How many times have we all heard the advice to ‘just be yourself’?” she says. “We all want to let our personality shine through.” But personalities constantly shift, she says. We relentlessly reinvent ourselves with every choice we make from morning to night. Her research points to three key ways networking can be a more positive and effective experience.
“We all know that networking is an important component of our careers and our social lives, but we often have to put in quite a bit of effort to motivate ourselves to do it.”

- Sheena Iyengar, Chazen Senior Scholar and S.T. Lee Professor of Business
Remind yourself who you are.

Iyengar asked peers and speech coaches to judge corporate executives who gave leadership speeches. One group of speakers was asked to contemplate their core values prior to the address, while the other received no instructions. Guess which group was judged most effective?

These results may infer that self-examination can help individuals better articulate what matters to them. That, in turn, can make networking exchanges more satisfying. Understanding your own authenticity factors and how others perceive you can be useful, says Iyengar. “You may be better equipped to find your own value-add.”

Don’t skip the after-party.

Every professional and alumni association is built around the idea that people want and need to network. But these interactions aren’t always successful. “When we are forced to network, we will collect people’s cards but don’t follow up,” says Iyengar. “We don’t talk about anything but résumé exchange, and no one has any real interest in getting together.”
The reason? The connection needs to feel authentic. “I have to feel I was naturally drawn to you rather than forced to interact with you,” she says.

One place that happens is not during a professional conference but afterward: at a dinner or during your free time, “usually late at night, when you’re drinking” Iyengar notes. The situation suddenly feels less artificial, allowing you to exchange more personal, better-remembered information.

**View networking as a skill you can develop.**

“We all know that networking is an important component of our careers and our social lives, but we often have to put in quite a bit of effort to motivate ourselves to do it,” Iyengar says. In a series of experiments, she studied the difference between thinking of networking as a personality trait (you’re either intrinsically good at it or not) and thinking of it as a skill. It turned out that the more people believe networking is a skill, the more they’re willing to do it and the more they like it.

For more on Professor Iyengar’s research on authenticity and other topics, go to www.sheenaiyengar.com.
Victor Lee ’83 has built a career on being attuned to nuances of cross-border communication. Here, he shares his top tips.

[Ed. note: I knew I’d met a consummate networker when I first saw Victor Lee ‘83 in action. He had invited me to an event on China, held by the World Economic Forum, and there was a long line at the security desk to check in. Victor worked that line like a pro, shaking hands and stopping to chat with people he knew (there were many!).

He has put his networking acumen to good use with his latest venture: TradePostUSA, a publishing company that promotes bilateral business, trade, and investments to and from the United States. I recently caught up with Lee to get his tips on networking with a global twist.]
Even introverts can do it.
“When Bill Clinton was bored or tired he would look for people to talk to. That’s an extravert for you: they get energy from people. I’m definitely an introvert, and we give energy when we interact with people. Being an introvert is different from being shy. When I meet new people I’m perfectly content to let them talk. I also find that networking is more effective that way—if they talk, I learn about them. If I talk, I don’t learn anything new.”

Get to the “why.”
“It helps to network with a purpose. I try to understand what my point of connection with the other person is: ‘Oh, we both went to Columbia together.’ I then look for some organized activity that will come out of the interaction: an introduction to someone else, a source of knowledge and information, or a business activity, archived for future use.”

When networking globally, change your approach.
“You’re treading a line when you are networking with someone from another country. You don’t want to be patronizing, but you need to get through cultural/societal/national differences to understand them. It’s a narrower path.” See his tips, right.
HOW TO BUILD RAPPORT ACROSS CULTURES

✓ Keep your language straightforward; avoid idioms or geographic references. For example, someone from another country might not understand the phrase “this project is going south” or “let’s put a pin in that.” Instead, say “this project isn’t going well” or “let’s remember to do that.”

✓ Try to be cleaner in your pronunciation.

✓ Find common cultural references—from your trip to their country to demonstrate familiarity with their background, or shared entertainment references from TV and movies.

✓ Don’t assume that a high degree of facility in English implies commonality of culture and depth of communication. For example, the word “brilliant” is often used informally by British people to mean “extremely good” or “extremely enjoyable.” But in the United States it refers to an idea or a person who’s a genius.

✓ It’s easy to devolve into sounding patronizing. Avoid saying things like “Gee your English is really good” or “What do Americans really think of the French?” Instead, try to discover what someone is like on a personal level and where your points of connection might be, and not treat them as a representative of their country.
...but don’t overthink it.

“You don’t want to walk around on eggshells. Networking is a process, not an activity. It shouldn’t be overly ‘sales-y.’ The objective should be to understand the other person and how his or her situation relates to yours.”

Keep track of who you meet.

“I use LinkedIn to reach out to people right after I’ve met them. I then use an app to upload their business cards into my contact list and a CRM to track my contacts with them.

I also subscribe to the theory of the “Dunbar number,” put forth by British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, as the primary way to think about my universe of contacts. Dr. Dunbar says you can have meaningful relationships [involving trust and obligation—there’s some personal history, not just names and faces] with only 150 people at a time. I keep a spreadsheet of several hundred key connections, with the 150 contacts who are currently the most meaningful at the top of list with notes as to our most recent interactions.

People move up and down on my spreadsheet as contact fades and new people replace them, especially for the all-important Dunbar group. I’ll refer to my spreadsheet several times a day to organize my outreach efforts and to trigger new ideas, especially for people with whom I have not recently been in touch. I find it helpful to be able to see lots of names at once, and it helps me make connections and introductions among people on my list.”
WHO DO YOU TRUST?

Your social media “friends” may number in the thousands, but if you met them on the street, would you recognize them? Probably not, according to Robin Dunbar, the British anthropologist who coined the eponymous “Dunbar number.”

The human brain limits the quantity of people with whom we can maintain “acquaintance” status to 150. The number of friends in our lives—people toward whom we have warm feelings but see infrequently—maxes out at about 50. Our inner circle, made up of people to whom we turn for support or sympathy, is generally no more than 15 people. And finally, true “intimates,” whom you rely on and see perhaps once a week, number no more than five.

These figures are not goals, or yardsticks of how sociable you are. Rather, use them to recognize that there are limits to how many people we can keep in our orbit as we live our busy lives.

(R.I.M. Dunbar, “Coevolution of neocortical size, group size and language in humans,” 1993)
NEW WAYS TO BE A BETTER GLOBAL PLAYER

Okay, you’ve built a robust network. Now what?
Sharpen your cross-border leadership skills.
Forge Connections, Boost Creativity

Building close connections with someone from another culture can enhance an individual’s creativity, according to a paper from researchers at Columbia Business School, INSEAD, UC Davis, and Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics.

Adam Galinsky, the Vikram S. Pandit Professor of Business, and his fellow researchers tested study participants’ creativity by giving them objects and asking them to come up with as many names to creatively market the products as possible in a set period of time—a task at which those with past intercultural relationships excelled.

Not all intercultural experiences have the same effect on creativity, however. “In another study, we’ve found that people who have lived abroad had an increase in creativity, but travel abroad has very little effect,” says Galinsky. Similarly, Galinsky explains, “people who had deep connections with someone from another culture experience growth in creativity—but not people with shallow connections to those from other cultures.”

The difference, the study’s authors suggest, comes down to engagement. While people are naturally exposed to different ideas and experiences as part of their day-to-day existence, it’s the desire to learn about and incorporate that
“We’ve found that people who have lived abroad had an increase in creativity, but travel abroad has very little effect.”

- Adam Galinsky, Vikram S. Pandit
  Professor of Business

information that sparks greater creativity. That explains why deep intercultural relationships can have a particularly potent effect on people’s creative juices. Intercultural experience helps people learn that “the same situation can be viewed from a completely different perspective,” Galinsky says.
**Lead Differently in Emerging Markets**

Good leaders are effective anywhere, says Jesse Wu, former chairman of China at Johnson & Johnson and a Lulu Chow Wang Senior Visiting Scholar at Columbia Business School. But in an emerging market, you’ll need to adapt.

“In order to bring an emerging market business to a developed stage, a leader has to be more hands-on,” says Wu. “I always said to my staff, ‘In an emerging market, you have to be prepared to do things two levels below your rank.’ By being hands-on, you teach the less experienced staff. After they learn, you can move the entire operation from an emerging-market state to a more developed-market state.”

**Be Prepared for Your Own Success**

“If I could go back twenty years, when I was a managing director in China, I would overinvest in talent,” says Wu. “As you witness the growth, as you successfully penetrate [the market] and reach out to more consumers, you find that you can’t handle the growth.” For example, a factory could lack additional capacity, or critical supply inputs may be depleted. Another warning sign: you lack the qualified staff to ensure product quality.
“So for that reason,” says Wu, “I would offer my own lessons to those who will be running emerging market companies: be prepared for your own success.”

**Beware “Indian Deference Syndrome”**

When Michael Morris, the Chavkin-Chang Professor of Leadership and a Chazen Senior Scholar, was doing research in Bangalore several years back, he worked with the M.S. Ramiah Institute of Management to build a computer lab that would help him gather data. As the project took shape, he one day met with the school’s IT manager to ask if he could come by the following Tuesday to check on the progress of the lab and test some software.
The manager agreed that Tuesday would be fine. When Morris arrived on the scheduled day there wasn’t a computer—or an IT person—in sight. In fact, carpenters will still hammering together the room. The manager had said “yes” to Morris when he clearly knew the lab wouldn’t be ready, but that was just the beginning of Morris’s problems. “I was utterly incapable of getting anything done at the institute,” he says. “I’ve never felt like such a bad manager in my life.”

That led to Morris’s research on “Indian Deference Syndrome,” an increasingly common label for a deeply rooted cultural norm. In one portion of his research, Morris asked MBA students in India and the United States to imagine they had graduated and were working as engineers with the opportunity to take some professional development classes. The choices were rigged so that one option sounded
fun and one sounded very technical. For example, one choice was a class on networking and the other was on modeling software cycles.

One group was asked which course their manager would prefer they take. A second group was asked which class they thought their peers would prefer. Among Indian students who were asked what their manager would prefer, a much larger proportion opted for the technical course than among US students. And for those who opted for the “fun” courses, guilt was significantly higher.

“Just thinking about what your manager would prefer changes the decision that you make,” Morris says.

**TAKEAWAYS FOR MANAGERS**

✓ If you want a subordinate’s thoughts about a plan, don’t reveal your own opinions until after you hear theirs.

✓ Don’t ask yes-or-no questions, because the natural inclination for Indian subordinates is to say yes. For example, don’t ask if a project will be ready next Tuesday. Ask what they need in order to finish the project.

✓ Don’t ask them what should be done, as that prompts deference. Ask them what they prefer or what they want to do.
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