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# The Dying Art Of Building Relationships



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“If you want others to like you, if you want to develop real friendships, if you want to help others at the same time as you help yourself, keep this principle in mind: Become genuinely interested in other people.” — Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

As I nervously sat in my first graduate school class, the professor distributed a required reading list that included Carnegie's classic. That was more than 30 years ago, but the principles in Carnegie's book continue to play a central role in all aspects of my life. In fact, I've reread the book every year since being introduced to it in 1989. Why? The answer is simple: Relationships matter.

## Technology Overload

So why do so many struggle in this area? While any number of things can negatively impact our ability to build relationships, one of the most common is our dependence on technology. The truth is technology often controls too much of our time. A [2016 report](#) by Nielsen indicates that adults in the United States spend almost half of their day, about 10 hours and 39 minutes, staring at screens. The negative ramifications of this obsession are now becoming obvious as a large segment of the U.S. workforce is said to [lack soft skills](#) such as communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. As critical as these skills are, however, the biggest casualty possibly lies in the lost art of building relationships.

This is often because we have skewed perspectives, causing us to focus on the wrong things. Contrary to popular opinion, our success will not be determined by our ability to close sales, the size of our bank accounts or even our overall net worth. Instead, our legacies will be defined by the relationships we build and the lives we impact along the journey. Simply stated, at the end of our lives, we'll be remembered based on the relationships we built. Period.

## Four Keys to Building Meaningful Relationships

So how do we build meaningful relationships that transcend transactional acquaintances? What practical steps can we take to ensure we're building

relationships that matter? Here are four keys to help you develop a relationship-building strategy that's right for you.

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### 1. Schedule time for relationship-building.

We're all busy, but we manage to find time for what's really important to us. Take an honest inventory of your priorities, and then schedule time on your calendar to invest in others. Often, we have the best intentions to make that phone call, schedule that client visit or write a thank-you note, only to have our day hijacked by the urgent and unexpected. Blocking out time on your calendar for building relationships elevates its importance in your day-to-day activities and provides a framework of accountability.

### 2. Invest in knowing your people.

For years I've kept a notebook containing important information about my colleagues and clients. This includes a photo, a brief biographical overview and notes about their families and businesses. Information such as birthdays, anniversaries, ages of children, favorite sports teams and hobbies can provide important launchpads for one-on-one conversations. For example, knowing a client has a child starting college or a family member struggling with an illness shows a level of concern that goes beyond a superficial relationship.

### 3. Make it personal.

In a world defined by automation, it's virtually impossible to overstate the importance of a personal contact. Embrace forms of personal contact that have become rare, such as handwritten notes, birthday cards and personal phone calls, to highlight special occasions. When someone receives an award, or their child is recognized for a significant achievement, clip the article from the paper and

enclose a handwritten note congratulating them for the accomplishment. It may seem old-school, but you'll be surprised by the impact it can have.

#### 4. Show up for things that matter.

Several years ago, my mother died after a long, difficult battle with cancer. While I don't remember every single person who attended her funeral, I vividly remember several who didn't. The truth is some life events are so significant that they require a personal touch. I've made it a practice for many years to attend funerals for spouses, children or parents of my clients. Does this often require a huge investment of time? Yes, but the end result is a deeper relationship built on respect and honor. In addition to funerals, events such as weddings, commencements and athletic championships often rise to the level of "must attend" life events. Make them a priority, and show up.

When we embrace a genuine interest in others and then go the extra mile in connecting with them, we build lifelong relationships defined by authenticity and trust. The legendary [Zig Ziglar](#) summed it up like this: "I believe you can have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want." And it all begins with relationships. Now that, my friends, is a pretty good trade.

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