



LEADERS & SUCCESS

Building Relationships With These Tips Can Turbocharge Your Career



ADAM SHELL | 07:00 AM ET 04/03/2026

You can't climb the corporate ladder or land the job you really want without building relationships that **connect you to others**.

If you want to be successful, connecting with people should be near the top of your to-do list, says Caroline Adams Miller, a career coach and author of "Big Goals: The Science of Setting Them, Achieving Them, and Creating Your Best Life."



The Story Of William O'Neil: Learn About The Legendary Investor And IBD Founder

Miller isn't a fan of the term "networking." Traditional networking, she says, is too transactional.

Miller says you're most likely to get your next job through so-called "weak ties." In 1973, sociologist Mark Granovetter introduced the concept of "the strength of weak ties," according to Psychology Today: "He argued that while our close friends (strong ties) provide emotional support, it's often our acquaintances (weak ties) who introduce us to new opportunities, ideas, and information."

Build Your Ties When Building Relationships

Casual conversations with an old classmate, a former colleague, a friend of a friend of a friend, someone at the gym, or somebody you just met at a business conference can **propel your career forward**, says Miller.

People who are just looking to gain an advantage from an interaction typically don't. Deep relationships are the road to happiness — and success, says Miller, citing academic research on the science of flourishing.

relationships.

It's Not Just About You When Building Relationships

Every conversation must have some kind of goal. It's not just about you. It has to be a two-way street. What is it, for example, that the other person is getting out of it?

"How can you help the other person?" said Miller. Every interaction must have purpose. In "Big Goals," Miller stresses that it's difficult to attain big, hard goals as a soloist.

"Big goals are never accomplished alone or in a silo," said Miller. "You must have other people in your life."

To better connect, turn the conversation toward the person you're talking to. "You need to know how to find them, connect with them and also help them," said Miller.

Position Yourself With Positivity

You can also learn from another networking concept called "broaden and build," says Miller, citing the work introduced by psychologist Barbara Fredrickson in the late 1990s. Fredrickson's research found that cultivating positive emotions broadens peoples' mindset, leading them to explore new relationships and build lasting and valuable contacts.

Unlike traditional networking, this approach focuses on building a network through **curiosity and collaboration**.

"Relationships are at the heart of happiness, success and micro moments of well-being, but also getting a job and being able to achieve your goals," said Miller.

Lean into the heliotropic effect, or the tendency of people wanting to be around people who make them feel better, Miller says. Projecting warmth is powerful when you enter a room or meet someone for the first time.

Breaking The Ice Is Step One

Connecting with people requires effort. That's especially **true for introverts** who often shrink at the thought of approaching someone at a business function.

To break through fear, view the outreach as an investment in yourself and other people.

"You're more likely to see it as something that you can do no matter what your wiring is," said Miller.

Cast A Wide Net When Building Relationships

A great contact, or a "guy who knows a guy who knows a guy," might be standing right next to you.

It could be a family member, an extended family member, an alumnus of the college you went to, an old teammate, a former colleague or commuter friend.

"Cast your net wide," said Miller. But **do your homework**, too.

"It's not just you knowing their name or how important they are," said Miller. "Look at their bio in great detail. Did they grow up in the same area you did? Find points of commonality so that you can really understand what (that person knows)."

Treat Networking As A Goal

To do that you must, figure out who you need to study or connect with. Home in on what you want to learn and, more important, learn something about the other person so the relationship benefits both of you.

"What will allow (you) to build a reciprocal relationship?" said Miller. If you know what the other person wants to accomplish, you'll be better able to offer up some of your connections that might help them.

power you forward.

"You're going to have to take a risk," said Miller. "You just have to go in with the assumption that this will not be easy, but it's important enough to me to get to the finish line."

How should an introvert who's uncomfortable in a room with strangers get through it? The introvert's secret weapon is "weak ties," said Miller.

"You don't have to be the loudest person in the room to build a powerful network," she said. "Just use curiosity. Have one real conversation, one person at a time. Because that's where career magic actually happens."

Stay In Touch When Building Relationships

Meeting someone new but never connecting with them again is the antithesis of networking. It's important to keep the lines of communication open.

Focus on the person you just met. Find out what the person is interested in. Are they into bird watching? Do they have a hobby? Are they into college basketball? Then set up online alerts to monitor for content that might interest that person.

"Send someone a note with the information, saying 'just thinking of you,'" said Miller. "Little gestures like that make a huge difference."

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