**Career Fitness: Nano-Networking Is Notworking**

They say that the best things come in small packages. That’s probably true when you’re talking about personal relationships as an entire industry devoted to tiny, colored boxes will attest. For business relationships, however, small isn’t the best; in fact, it can actually be injurious to your job search.

If you’ve been in the world of work for more than fifteen minutes, you will have heard someone opine about the importance of networking. Having a robust circle of business contacts, preferably on a social media site like LinkedIn, is now considered de rigueur among those looking for a new or better job.

But here’s the problem with that advice: what’s done on social media sites today isn’t networking, it’s nano-networking. It’s the smallest (and easiest) part of networking – making contact. Nano-networking involves building up the widest possible circle of friends, followers and connections and leaves out the hardest (and most productive) part – forging meaningful relationships with the people behind those electronic touch points.

Why go to all that trouble? Because you’d like to draw on that network for assistance with your job search, right? Well then, ask yourself this: do you really think that someone you’ve never met, never communicated with since your initial contact and know only as a profile on some social media site is really going to risk their reputation and maybe even their own employment situation by recommending you to their employer or even referring you to some other contact they may have? It’s not likely.

So, if you want your network to actually work for you, you have to work at it. As the word itself says, it’s netWORK, not netNAP. You have to invest the time and effort to build professional relationships among all those friends, followers and connections you have.

**Moving From Nano to Giga-Networking**

Networking isn’t a contact sport; it’s a team sport. You win when the people in your network care enough about you to help you out. How do you get them to feel that way? You practice the Golden Rule of Networking: “You give in order to get.” You make yourself helpful to them so they’ll be inclined to be helpful to you.

Start with your closest friends, followers and connections or what the social media mavens call your 1st degree of separation contacts. Then, start building a relationship with each of them:

* First, invest the time to learn more about them; check their LinkedIn profile, Facebook page and personal Web-site to see what they’re interested in and care about.
* Second, look for articles, blog posts, videos and any other kind of content they might enjoy or find useful. You can either make this an intentional search or simply be on the lookout for appropriate material as you go about your day.
* Third, pass whatever appropriate content you find along to them with a personal note indicating that you thought of them when you came across it.

That simple process will signal to each person in your network that you’re working for them – that you care enough about them to take a little time out of your day to be helpful to them. I call that giga-networking – it uses small gestures of support to others to create a big impact on their willingness to help you in your job search.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

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