



BUILDING KEY RELATIONSHIPS

THAT TAKE YOUR CAREER
TO THE NEXT LEVEL

QUICK START GUIDE

*May*BUSCH

ACCELERATE YOUR TIME TO SUCCESS

WHY BUILD RELATIONSHIPS?

Relationships are at the heart of being successful at work and in your career.

They are a magnetic force that attracts people to you so you can get things done, be seen and respected, and move forward to higher levels in your career where you can do more good in the world and fulfill your commitments to your family and your self.

However, certain relationships are harder to build than others - usually the ones that matter most to us professionally so we're under pressure to get it right.

This Quick Start Guide provides concrete steps you can take to make it easier to build those key relationships successfully, and take the anxiety out of the process.

We'll cover **who** you need to build relationships with, strategies for **how** to do it, and an **Action Plan Framework** for building your most important relationship right now.

**“YOUR ADVICE IS HELPING ME PROGRESS
FORWARD AND DO WELL IN CIRCLES THAT I NEVER
IMAGINED THAT I WOULD BE A PART OF.”**

SARA STEIGERWALD

WHO

YOU NEED TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH

There are two main categories of key people you need to build relationships with to advance professionally: **Stakeholders and Supporters**. Both are essential to your career progression, but for different reasons.

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are the people who have a say in your career or your business. You may like each other or you may not. Either way, you need to deal with them and ideally have them on your side. When you get these relationships right, you can gain crucial insights that enable you to get buy-in and deliver better results. This, in turn, gives you greater influence in your organization and beyond.

Here are four categories to help you think through your stakeholders. Ideally, some of your Stakeholders also will be (or become) Supporters.

SENIORS

These can be people in your direct reporting line, as well as those who are in other parts of the organization.

COLLEAGUES

These are your peers and people who are at a similar seniority level to you.

JUNIORS

These are people who either report to you or who report to others but regularly work with you on projects.

CLIENTS

For these purposes, they are the people you and your team serve, and can be external or internal to your organization.

Once you have this list of key stakeholders, you can more readily assess where you're already strong, where you need to do some more work, and where there are gaps.

SUPPORTERS

Supporters are people who are clearly on your side. They're the super valuable community of people who can and do play at least one of the following three roles: they pluck you out and advocate for you, they pick you up when you're down, they provide insights and feedback that help you be successful.

Having a strong community of supporters makes it easier to achieve your professional goals and have more fun in the process. There are five special categories of Supporters, and some people may fall into more than one category.

SPONSORS

Someone in a position of power who advocates for you and uses their political capital to help you advance your career or your business, or both.

MENTORS

People you turn to for guidance on specific aspects of your personal and professional development because they have greater expertise and experience.

PEER COACHES

A small circle of people who trust and respect each other, are going through similar challenges, and choose to make themselves available to each other to share ideas and help each other work through their respective issues in a confidential setting.

CONNECTORS

People who are well connected internally and externally, and enjoy making introductions and connecting various people in their broad networks. They can save you loads of time and anxiety while helping you build your relationships.

RAVING FANS

People who think you are wonderful, speak well of you whenever they can, and are happy to support you and remind you of what you are like as your best self when you need reminding. They are your secret weapon.

Once you've identified this community of supporters, you can see where you may have gaps and the actions to take to strengthen as well as leverage this community.

HOW

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING WITH KEY PEOPLE

Now that you've identified the key people for you professionally, here are three strategies for how to build and improve your relationships with them.

1. GET IN THE RIGHT MINDSET

Your interactions and relationship building efforts will go better when you come from a mindset that contains these 3 qualities:

"I am capable and worthy"

This will help you come from a positive place of confidence and competence. Make it a positive self-fulfilling prophecy.

"Give first"

This will help you get out of your own head and think about the other person's needs, look at things from their perspective, and build trust.

"Mutual advantage"

This will help you make it a two-way street so that it leads to a stronger relationship that lasts because it's based on mutual respect.

2. USE PIVOTAL MOMENTS

Timing is key when you're building relationships, and there will be moments when what you do or don't do can make a real difference.

So be on the lookout for those Pivotal Moments when you can jump in and make that point, ask that question or help someone else.

MICRO MOMENTS

These will be everyday opportunities. For example:

Regular meetings

Instead of taking ordinary staff meetings for granted, be attuned to how you can use them to your advantage (e.g., articulate a new idea, create allies, or influence peoples' thinking).

The cafeteria line

Whether you're grabbing lunch or waiting for a coffee, be alert for opportunities to connect with people you don't yet know but would like to.

Travel

When heading to a meeting in the car or on a flight with someone senior, use that time strategically to build relationships by having a list ready of topics you want to cover.

When someone has had a success

It's a natural time to offer congratulations and ask to learn more about how they achieved the win.

MACRO MOMENTS

These will be big moments you plan for weeks in advance. For example:

Your formal presentations

In the lead-up to big presentations or board meetings, you have a natural reason to consult with key people as you prepare. And the session itself is an opportunity to be visible and demonstrate your capabilities.

Others' speaking engagements

Ask a question during the Q&A session of someone else's speech. Then go up to them after the talk to ask for a meeting. They'll be receptive - every speaker's nightmare is that there are no questions!

Big meetings or conferences

Use the breaks just before or after a conference session to connect briefly and suggest a follow up meeting or conversation.

Social events

You never know when you might run into at the parents' evening at your child's school or at a sporting event on the weekend. And you can invite key people to events that you want to go to and achieve two goals at the same time.

Whatever the Pivotal Moment, the key is to recognize it and make the most of it.

Here are some questions to help you to be prepared:

“When can I help my key people?”

... and knowing who those key people are

“When can I share my branding message?”

... and having that branding message ready to go

“When can I make an ask?”

... and knowing what you want to ask for

“Who else cares about this? Who should I tell?”

... and then sharing that information

3. EXPERIMENT

This means taking the smallest possible step forward that doesn't “bet the farm”, but still helps you move toward your objective and figure out whether you're on the right track. Here are some time efficient ways to experiment.



COFFEES

Most people are happy to have a coffee. It's a low risk and time efficient way to have a brief catch-up in a relaxed setting that can extend if it's going well.



THE BUSINESS UPDATE

Put together a 1-2 pager that contains the key points about your business and how it contributes to the overall unit and organization. Have it handy to use with seniors and colleagues or use it as a reason to set up meetings with key people.



CLIENT BRIDGES

Invite a key stakeholder or senior person to a client meeting, or to speak at an event you're hosting. You not only give that person a platform to shine, but a chance to see you in action as well.



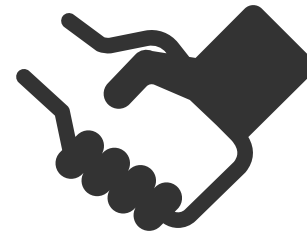
VOLUNTEERING

Charities or company-related initiatives can be wonderful opportunities to get to know others in a different setting while contributing to a cause you care about. And if you take a leadership role, it raises your profile further. So find a cause you care about and put your hand up.



ASK FOR THEIR ADVICE OR TO HEAR THEIR CAREER STORIES

People like talking about themselves, and you'll learn from their examples, discover more common ground, and build a closer relationship in the process.



OFFER TO HELP THEM

For example, if you know they'd like to do more business with companies in the tech sector and you've just come across someone who is looking for a speaker for an upcoming tech conference, then offer to make an introduction.

ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

Now it's time to put your relationship building skills to work.

Here's an action plan framework for building those key relationships.

Choose one person to start with and answer these questions to help determine possible areas of commonality and ways in which you can add value to each other:

Do we have similar clients (internal and/or external)? Who are they?

Do our business areas overlap? How do they complement each other?

Do we have similar business challenges? What might they be?

Do I have insight that could help them or vice versa? In what way?

Would this person give me access to a network that would be useful and vice versa? What would that be?

Then, go through the following 5-step Action Plan Framework for building your relationship with that person.

Write down your answers so you can refer back to your action plan and modify it as things progress.

1

MINDSET

Come from a place of positive intent and self-belief. What do you want to be thinking as you approach them? What mindset will you adopt?

2

CONTENT

Start with the WIIFY (“what’s in it for you” where “you” is the person you are seeking to build your relationship with). What might be an interesting idea, insight or piece of information that they want to learn more about or find useful? How could you state it in a way that sparks their interest?

3

STYLE

Figure out how they like to be approached and to receive information. Would they prefer a phone call, email, impromptu conversation, scheduled meeting? Do they like getting straight to the point or engaging in “small talk” first? Will they want a written presentation, a casual conversation or something in between?

4

TIMING

What’s their preferred time of day to meet, speak or engage with people? Is there a particularly stressful time of the year to avoid? Make friends with their personal assistants who know the care and feeding of their bosses, and can help you to navigate schedules successfully.

5

FOLLOW-UP

Relationships are built over a series of interactions, so it’s important to have something to follow up on, or a reason to come back and check in.

If there's nothing immediate, get permission to touch base again so you won't feel funny about following up with them later on.

For example, "Thanks so much for your time. I'd love to check back in with you in a month or two if that's okay." They almost always say yes.

And now...

IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION

Remember, it's about getting started and making progress; not waiting for the perfect time and the optimal script.

Do some experiments, spot a few pivotal moments, adopt that positive mindset, and schedule some time to work on your business update.

When setbacks happen (and they're inevitable), cut yourself some slack and learn from your mistakes. They'll make for some great stories later as long as you don't let it stop you from taking more steps.

Whatever happens, keep going.

The more steps you take, the more confident you'll become and the more relationships you'll build. And the sooner you'll see results.

So, get going and have some fun with it.

I'm rooting for your great success!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "May". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.



MAY CHIEN BUSCH

EXECUTIVE COACH, SPEAKER, ADVISOR, AUTHOR

May Busch is an international executive and career consultant, coach, speaker and facilitator, and the author of *ACCELERATE: 9 Capabilities to Achieve Success at Any Career Stage*. She is passionate about helping people thrive at work and reach their full potential.

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