

GROW YOUR NETWORK FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

**How to cultivate long-lasting relationships that
propel you & your business forward**



**In business, we tend to help our connections over strangers.
So build connections now, talk business later.**

At the intersection of business and connection lies opportunity.

Running a business or a department can often feel like a solitary battle — but it doesn't have to. NO matter your position, whether you are the sole owner of your business or if you lead a division, you aren't in it alone. If approached with the right mindset, cultivating strong connections among business owners and associates will help you grow faster and develop a strong support system along the way.

That said, business connections can also be volatile. If mishandled or approached in the wrong way — or for the wrong reasons —, they can destroy relationships and hurt your bottom line, leaving you feeling more alone than when you started.

So how do you build a strong business connection while also protecting your business (and yourself)?

The first step is to understand what different kinds of business connections exist — some are far better for you than others!

This workbook will guide you through this and other important considerations around business connections. You'll examine your own strengths and areas for growth, identify the business connections that will be most valuable to you, and learn how to recognize red flags for business connections that may cause you headaches.

As someone who has been entrenched in business for years, I've learned to embrace the power of business connections. But, as with any relationship, these must be approached with care and consideration.

Warmly,



Polly Rossi, CMP-HC, CMM



What is a business connection?

REFLECTION: Use the space below to draw a picture or write down what a high-quality, mutually beneficial business connection looks like for you.

Business connections — an overview

When referring to business connections, there are four different possible relationships you may find yourself in. Those are: The Taker, The Distraction, The Wild Child, and The Ally. There are **two main considerations** when looking at these business connections.

Consideration #1: Liability or Risk

Within any relationship there is some assumption of risk. Low risk relationships tend to be safer — especially within the context of your business. These business connections probably won't harm your own aspirations and, in fact, may help them.

On the other end of the spectrum, high risk relationships are unstable. If they go awry it could mean trouble for you and your business.

Consideration #2: Benefit or Value

The second consideration within a business connection is how likely it is to provide you with value. A low-benefit relationship does nothing to grow your business. In fact, it may take more than it gives. On the other hand, a high-benefit relationship has the *potential* to provide your business with a lot of value and growth.

What you want is the right combination of factors. A low-risk, high-value relationship looks far different from a high-risk, low-value relationship, or any of the other combinations. In fact, using these two considerations, you end up with **four distinct types of business relationships**.

ACTIVITY: Given the blank chart below, jot down the different qualities you imagine each of the four types of business relationships possess. Think about your current connections and place them in a square.

The Distraction	The Ally
The Taker	The Wild Child

Breaking down the 4 types of business connections

On the previous page, you made some guesses about the four different types of business relationships. Let's take a look at how they actually break down.

The Taker (High Risk/Low Benefit):

A high risk/low benefit relationship is dangerous. It's the sort of connection that, in actuality, is no connection at all. It comes with a lot of risk (for yourself and for your business) and little reward. If you find yourself in a connection with the Taker, it's best to maintain a healthy distance.

The Wild Child (High Risk/High Benefit):

The wild child of relationships, if this connection pays off it could mean value in spades. However, if it doesn't, you may be in trouble. This is the sort of business relationship you should approach with caution. You're putting yourself at great risk for a potential benefit that may or may not pan out.

The Distraction (Low Risk/Low Benefit):

These business connections may provide companionship, but they fall short when it comes to inspiring and benefitting you. These relationships are safe, but they won't serve as platforms for growth within your business.

The Ally (Low Risk/High Benefit):

This is the sweet spot. A business connection built on little risk and much benefit is advantageous to all parties involved. It requires an equal amount of giving and receiving, and the relationship itself continues to grow with your business.

REFLECT: Which of the four business connections have you encountered? What was your experience like?

Identify the characteristics of strong business connections

Strong business connections rely on a variety of characteristics, such as:

- **Commitment:** Both want the relationship to continue
- **Trust:** Each party trusts the other has their best interests in mind
- **Cooperation:** Reciprocation of effort is experienced over time ("If you don't call me, I will eventually stop calling you, but if you call me, I'll continue calling you.")
- **Mutual goal-setting:** Both parties work towards common goals that give them a strong reason to continue the connection
- **Interdependence:** Both parties rely on one another, rather than engaging in power struggles
- **Satisfaction:** The friends accept each other for who they are and don't ask more of each other
- **Respect:** Both parties respect one another and their time, even in light of some differences

ACTIVITY: Place each of the additional characteristics provided on the next page into the chart, based on where you think they belong.

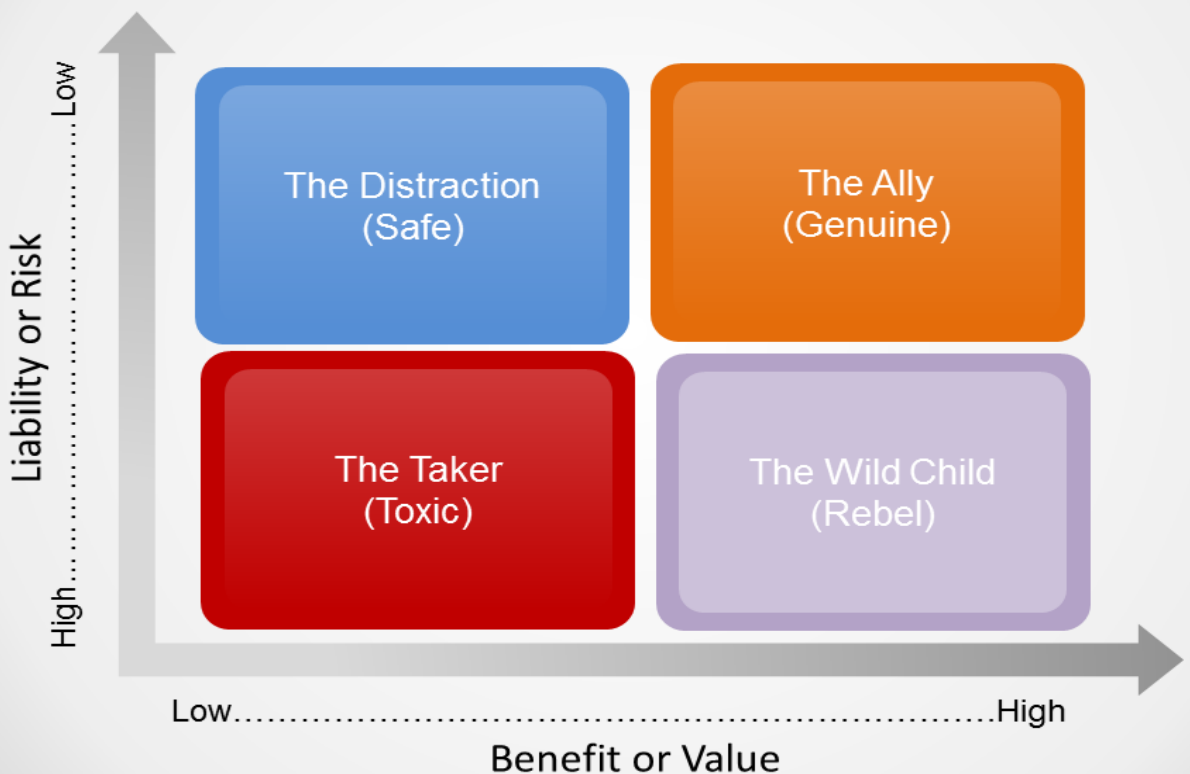
HIGH RISK	
LOW RISK	
HIGH VALUE	
LOW VALUE	

Word bank:

- Tries to take control
- Listens to you
- Trusts your input
- Talks you up to their community
- Makes big promises
- Lacks follow-through
- Tries to sell to you
- Prioritizes self
- Respects your skill set
- Is willing to set mutual goals
- Is kind, but uninspiring
- Perpetually late
- Negotiates constantly
- Encourages you
- Provides mentorship
- Prefers conflict to cooperation
- Brings a positive vibe to all interactions
- Values more than income/gain
- Avoids taking chances

REFLECTION: Which of the qualities and characteristics discussed in this section are most important to you in a business connection? Why?

Connections as Business Partners



Quiz: What do you bring to the table?

Before you begin to evaluate your potential business connections, a little self-reflection is necessary. After all, it's important to know what you're bringing to the table yourself. Use the questions below to help you identify where you fall on the spectrum. Be as honest as possible!

- 1. When attending an in-person meeting, I am:**
 - a. Always early
 - b. Right on time
 - c. It depends
 - d. Always fashionably late
- 2. When speaking with a friend, I am:**
 - a. A better listener
 - b. Sometimes I talk, sometimes I listen
 - c. It starts with me, but I'm willing to listen too
 - d. I'm always talking up a storm
- 3. How frequently do I initiate communication with others?**
 - a. I always check in
 - b. You may not hear from me, but I make sure you know I'm there if you need me
 - c. Sometimes I initiate it, sometimes I don't
 - d. Never — that's their job
- 4. When collaborating on a project, I**
 - a. Make sure everyone's ideas are heard
 - b. Support the ideas of those participating in lieu of my own
 - c. Involve myself differently depending on the project and how invested I am
 - d. Make sure my ideas are heard and acted upon — always
- 5. When celebrating successes, I**
 - a. Recognize those involved and give myself credit
 - b. Ensure everyone involved receives recognition first
 - c. Recognize others who are involved when I remember
 - d. Focus on how much I deserve to be celebrating
- 6. When approaching a new partnership, I**
 - a. Want to make sure everyone benefits
 - b. Offer up any resources and insight I have available without expecting anything in return
 - c. Go by my gut and do what feels right in the moment
 - d. Check to see what's in it for me

7. Looking back on my past business connections, they
 - a. Have propelled my business forward
 - b. Haven't been crucial to my success, but have been nice to have
 - c. Tend to be sporadic
 - d. Have been short-lived
8. When it comes to making time for others, I
 - a. Set pre-determined boundaries and stick to them
 - b. Make an effort to always be available when I'm needed
 - c. Try my hardest, but sometimes things come up
 - d. Don't. There's too much to do

Now go back and tally up your responses. If you responded with:

Mostly As you are **The Ally**

Mostly Bs you are **The Distraction**

Mostly Cs you are **The Wild Child**

Mostly Ds you are **The Taker**

REFLECT: Based on your quiz responses, what is one opportunity for self-growth you are able to pinpoint?

REFLECT: How can you work on this self-growth area to turn it into a strength? Jot down three to five different ideas.

QUIZ: Evaluate potential relationships

Now that you know where you stand, you can apply the same questions to potential business connections. For this quiz, think of one business connection you are developing or have developed.

Keep in mind, these are guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Each relationship is different and presents different opportunities and different potential drawbacks.

1. **When dealing with deadlines, they are:**
 - a. Always early
 - b. Right on time
 - c. It depends
 - d. Always fashionably late
2. **When in a room of colleagues, they are:**
 - a. More likely to listen than to speak
 - b. Sometimes talk, sometimes listen
 - c. It starts with them, but sometimes they're willing to listen too
 - d. Always talking up a storm
3. **How often do they check in, even when they don't stand to directly financially benefit?**
 - a. They always check in
 - b. I may not hear from them, but I know they are there if needed
 - c. Sometimes they initiate it, sometimes they don't
 - d. Never — that's their job
4. **When working with a team on solving a challenge, they**
 - a. Make sure everyone's ideas are heard and considered
 - b. Are fully present and supportive, but do not contribute in a way that supports growth
 - c. Involve themselves differently depending on the project and how invested they are
 - d. Make sure their ideas are heard and acted upon — always
5. **When they are complimented on a job well done or celebrating a completed project, they**
 - a. Recognize those involved while also giving themselves credit
 - b. Deflect the attention elsewhere
 - c. Recognize others who are involved when they remember
 - d. Focus on how much they deserve to be celebrating

6. When it comes to considering a collaborative relationship, they
 - a. Want to make sure everyone benefits
 - b. Offer up resources and insight without expecting anything in return
 - c. Are difficult to pin down
 - d. Check to see what's in it for them
7. Are their prices fair, or do you always have to negotiate?
 - a. Their costs are reasonable; also, you trust their value and that they're offering you a fair rate
 - b. Their costs are reasonable, and they're always happy to negotiate with you
 - c. Their costs are high for the value offered, and they'll only negotiate sometimes
 - d. Their costs are high for the value offered, and they refuse to negotiate
8. When you try to get ahold of them, are they reliably responsive?
 - a. They set pre-determined boundaries and stick to them, so if you reach out during those hours, they will be there
 - b. They are reliable when present, but provide little in the way of pre-determined boundaries
 - c. They try their hardest, but are often hard to get ahold of
 - d. They are rarely available and tend to always be involved with other projects

Now go back and tally up your responses. If you responded with:

Mostly As	they are	The Ally
Mostly Bs	they are	The Distraction
Mostly Cs	they are	The Wild Child
Mostly Ds	they are	The Taker

REFLECT: Based on your quiz responses, is this a good relationship to pursue? Why or why not?

REFLECT: Can you pinpoint any areas to work on with this person so that a low-risk, high-value relationship could be created?

You can retake the quiz for other business connections as many times as you want.

Establish Smart Business Relationships

Just because someone is an Ally, it doesn't mean they are necessarily an ideal choice for a business friend in the moment. Their skills might not dovetail with what you need, and their needs might not be in sync with your offerings.

REFLECT: What does your business need to grow? What kinds of areas of expertise or resources do you need that would come from an outside source, like a business connection?

REFLECT: Do you know of someone who fits the bill? If so, write their name. If not, brainstorm where you might be able to find this person. This could include your workplace, formal training or higher education, conferences, social media groups, and more.

Once you have identified a potential Ally, you need to have an honest conversation with them about being mutually beneficial business friends. The following section introduces The Business connection Manifesto, which you can share with them — or you can have a more informal discussion about your commitment to help each other grow.

Tie it Together: The Business connection Manifesto

If you decide to pursue a business connection, it's important to make sure everyone is equally on board. Make sure each potential member of the relationship is committed to following each of the following tenets.

We shall...

1. Be fully engaged in the business connection — and if we aren't, we'll step away.
2. Focus on solutions that will provide a benefit to all.
3. Admire and support one another's uniquenesses.
4. Offer encouragement to one another.
5. Support one another's mutual growth.
6. Strive to improve ourselves and our communities.
7. Focus on achieving our dreams and ambitions.
8. Respect one another's time and energy.
9. Honor one another's right to earn a living.

REFLECTION: Are there any additional tenets you think are important to add to your business connection manifesto? Write them below, and make it your own.

Conclusion

Now that you've dug into what a positive business connection looks like, it's time to take action. Here what you can do next:

1. Consider any existing business connections you have, and make a commitment to evaluate them regularly. Business connections can change over time.
2. Use the information within this book to monitor when a relationship may be on the verge of becoming toxic, and take steps to maintain healthy connections.
3. Pin up your personalized Business connection Manifesto somewhere visible.
4. Approach each new potential relationship as an opportunity, and place it in the context of the quiz.
5. Check in with yourself and make sure you're meeting the same expectations you have of others.

Remember: In business, friends help friends over strangers. *So build connections now, talk business later.*

Ready to talk meetings and events with an Ally?

In today's digital age, face-to-face interaction has never been more important. You want impact. You know a handshake leaves a stronger impression than an email or conference call.

If you want to take your business to the next level, it's time to harness the power of meaningful connections. Our expert team will make it happen.

Please reach out with your event needs to info@meetingachievements.com for a quote.



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