

By Authors of *Work The Pond!* Darcy Rezac, Judy Thomson, Gayle Hallgren-Rezac

# Table of Contents

Secret 1. You have to kiss a lot of frogs t
Secret 2. Networking: it's not all about yo
Secret 3. You get one chance to make a
Secret 4. Treat everyone as equals
Secret 5. Give yourself the password to t
Secret 6. Learn the power of questions
Secret 7. Be there and know something
About Us

#### SMALL WORLDS PRESS

A division of SHEPA LEARNING COMPANY Vancouver, BC Canada V6H 4E4 Phone: (604) 738-7663 (POND) Toll Free: 1-866-738-7660

Email: info@shepalearning.com

Website: https://shepalearning.com/

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to find a prince	3
ou	8
a first impression	9
	10
the network	12
	14
	17
	21

# THE 7 SECRETS OF *POSITIVE NETWORKING*®

**Secrets**—that's an overused word, but from our decades of experience, the seven ideas we are sharing here must be secrets because so few people use them. They come from 'the connector's handbook', *Work The Pond!*, which contains our seven essential steps to building better networks. These secrets will



help you if have anxiety when it comes to networking, if you want to improve your skills, or enhance your career.

- Gayle Hallgren-Rezac, Judy Thomson & Darcy Rezac Shepa Learning Company



## Secret 1. You have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince.

People attend our Power of Positive Networking® session because they want to

learn how to expand their network. But a crazy thing happens! A person arrives, and where do they sit? Either at a table with people they already know, or they find an empty table at the back of the room. Then the next person arrives. Where do they sit? They find **another empty table** and sit there. Then we'll go over and introduce ourselves and ask them what they are hoping to learn at this workshop. They tell us they want learn how to network better!



So here's the first secret, we've got to connect more, and connect at every opportunity. In other words, *you have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince... or princess.* Not every connection works, but you increase your chances of building successful relationships if you engage with others.

### Proximity is an opportunity, but build a plan as well

We often conduct an anonymous survey prior to our sessions to find out our participants' views on networking. One question we ask is, "How many times a month do you go to something where you can meet new people?" We are sad to say

that even before COVID, the average response was **less than one event a month**. It's hard to meet people if we don't actually step away from our computers or phones and connect face-toface. Research shows that faceto-face engagement is how we build **the highest-trust relationships** inside and outside our company.



E-mail is one-way communication that is fraught with conversational potholes because those subtle indicators of body language and tone are missing. Most importantly we don't get that immediate feedback from the other person and it's that instant dialogue, when done right, that builds rapport and trust. And even though Zoom or other virtual calls do help, they don't give us the many rewards of a face-toface interaction.

#### Set a Goal: Get out of your office once a week

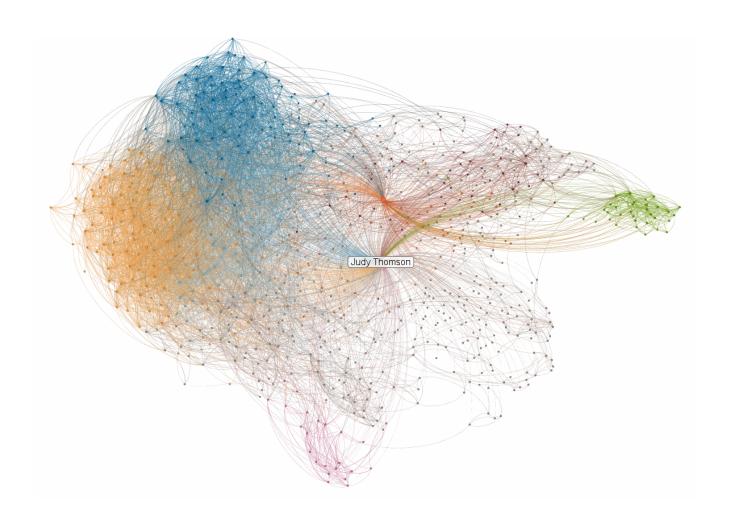
We know a young professional, Naomi, who sets a goal of meeting one new person a week at her large environmental firm. She has even diarized it on her computer calendar. The result is she now knows a wide variety of people in her company, which makes it easier for her to coordinate projects between departments, and she is more comfortable attending large company events.

Whether you work from home or office or a combination, step away from your desk and go meet some new people! And do it on a regular basis like Naomi. When you meet someone new you are one degree away from their network.

noto by Kindel Media from Pexels

To illustrate what we mean, take a look at the map of Judy's LinkedIn network. She has over 1,700 connections (almost all of whom she met face-to-face first).

What's amazing is that just 2 degrees (handshakes) away she is connected to 868,000 people! Think of the resources she can tap into. That is powerful stuff.



### Face-to-face takes time. I am way too busy!

As counterintuitive as it seems, committing the time to build a network actually saves you time. A network gives you:

- Access to new information that you can't get any other way
- Access to new people and their networks "new 6-degree connections in the service of organizational goals"<sup>1</sup>
- Access to people higher up "the food chain" than you may normally come into contact in your daily work
- you

#### **Raise your Shepa**

People often confuse the name of our company, Shepa Learning Company, with sherpa, the mountain guides and carriers. The words look similar but 'shepa' is the Tibetan word for consciousness or awareness, and that's the point we want to raise everyone's awareness of networking opportunities around them every day. If there are two people present, it's a networking opportunity. Keep this thought in mind when you are standing in line at your local coffee place, or waiting for the elevator in your office building. These 'networking opportunities' don't need a ticket to attend. But 'buy the ticket' as well and become a brand ambassador for your company.

#### Bottom Line: it's career enhancing!

We've seen people make partner in law firms, move up to vice-presidents in banks, and go from having a stealth profile in the community to becoming the 'go-to' person in their field by getting out and networking. Volunteering on committees that need your expertise, being a speaker or panelist for a local business event or participating in a mentoring program for young professionals, are all great ways to get known.

Support - you will call on your network and your network will expect the same of



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ibarra and Hunter, How Leaders Create and Use Networks, Harvard Business Review, January 2007

# People do business with those they know, trust and like.

# People recommend people they know, trust and like.™

-Shepa Learning Company

# Secret 2. Networking: it's not all about you.

So many people still think of networking as 'how others can help me'. Instead, here is the seminal secret of all Positive Networkers: they know networking is not about what others can do for them, instead it's "discovering what they can do for others".

#### **Positive Networking**<sup>®</sup>

Over a decade ago we coined the term *Positive Networking*<sup>®</sup> in our book, *Work The* Pond!, and during this time our philosophy has resonated with our readers and audiences alike. When we share this secret of 'networking done right<sup>™</sup>' there's a visible sense of relief – "You mean I don't have to go sell myself?" No, you don't.

### It's all about THE RELATIONSHIP

Our 'what-can-I-do-for-you' philosophy is how people build high-trust relationships, and at the end of the day, everything in work and life is about the relationships that we build and nurture. Guy Kawasaki, a leading blogger and Apple fellow, and author of many best-sellers, says that our definition of networking is "the world's best...Once you understand that, the rest is just mechanics."

#### Support from the social media gurus

It is nice to see one of the leaders of the social media world. Reid Hoffman cofounder of LinkedIn, also supporting the concept of building these types of high trust, 'what-can-I-do-for-others' relationships. "If all I do is take what I can get from you, I'm Hoffman says, "Try to help people first. not truly relevant to your life. You may have to Don't keep score. Be aware that many speak to me now, but if I lose the job that brings good deeds get reciprocated, but don't be us into contact, you probably won't speak to me calculated about it. Think about again." —Tim Sanders relationships all the time, not just when Love is the Killer App you need something."<sup>2</sup> Brilliant!





#### Bottom Line: It's the foundation

As Adam Grant, the author of *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success,* says, "From a relationship perspective, givers build deeper and broader connections." In other words, having a *Positive Networking*® mindset is actually the foundation upon which to build all your relationships.



# Secret 3. You get one chance to make a first impression.

Your mother was right; you only get one chance to make a first impression. Here's something your mother might not have known: the research says that you only get about **three seconds**. In three seconds people can project themselves as aloof, uninterested, judgmental, or they can project a feeling of being engaged, interested and connected. It's pretty easy to see which is more appealing and more likely to develop into something positive. But, like the first two secrets, we see the former behavior happening all the time. And if your Mom's advice isn't enough, then there's science to back it up—functional MRIs, neuroscience and social intelligence. Below is a brief description of what's really happening when two people connect.

#### **Emotions are contagious**

Let's say you meet someone at a business event and as you are talking to them you quickly sense there seems to be a 'wall' building between you. That person isn't interested in talking to you and you feel it! When this happens what's your response? You probably **react** to their demeanor. Your body stiffens, your smile tightens and you catch that person's negative vibe. Here's the problem: emotions are contagious and you just caught their negative virus!

Daniel Goleman, a leading writer on social intelligence says, "the brain's areas for movement and emotion are peppered with 'mirror neurons,' a newly discovered

class of brain cells that act like neural WiFi. These neurons specialize in tuning into the person we are with and creating in our brain a replica of the other's emotions, actions, and intentions – tuning us to their wavelength." As Daniel Goleman says, "emotions are contagious".



#### So how do you deal with that negative virus?

If you feel someone shutting down, putting up what we call 'The Wall', don't catch their negative 'virus'. It will cause you to lose your confidence and concentration. Instead, stay focused, continue to smile, keep your body language open and go on with the conversation in a positive manner. Perhaps change the topic to something else. Your goal is be confident, energetic and unfazed by their neural head game. Leave that person with a positive impression.

#### Bottom Line: Networking is a philosophy and a skill set.

If you dread networking, learn the skills and you will become more confident. Our comprehensive online course, *Power of Positive Networking*<sup>®</sup> gives you all the skills you need.

# Secret 4. Treat everyone as equals.

Secret Number 4 is a natural progression from Secret Number 3, creating a first impression. In *Work The Pond!* Judy's good friend Alice Mong, a well-connected networker who is the Executive Director at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center shares her philosophy about people who make judgement calls:

"The bottom line is I enjoy people. They are not commodities to me. I hate it when people scope around and are quite mercenary. They drop you like a hot potato the minute they exchange business cards, check out your title or company and decide you are not worth their effort."

Alice's reaction is universal. Not treating everyone as equals has serious repercussions. We can all remember being snubbed or being someone's space filler. Be memorable for the right reasons.

Here's the most interesting part of this story: you want to know Alice Mong, she is **one of the most connected people** you could meet!



#### **"I DIDN'T MEET ANYONE IMPORTANT"**

When Darcy was managing director of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, a business organization with a worldwide reputation for networking, he began teaching the skills of *Positive Networking*® at new members' receptions. He found there was a real appetite to learn "networking done right". But sometimes he would hear comments like, "I went to an event and didn't meet anyone important." Darcy's response? "What did the people you connected with get from meeting you?"

*Positive Networking*® is not about closing a sale, but opening a relationship. *Positive* Networkers are likeable and trustworthy. They add value to the conversation, they act like a host, rescuing wallflowers, opening the circle, connecting people and following up with appropriate information. They treat everyone as equals.

#### TIP

As part of your time commitment to attending a networking event, book an extra 20 to 30 minutes to follow up with people if you've promised them something, an article, a link to a website that would be helpful to them, or a time to reconnect. Why do it right away? We get busy and after 24 hours it doesn't seem as important, by the second day it is way down on your to-do list and it doesn't happen.

#### Bottom Line: we are one handshake away!

When we shake hands with someone or start a conversation with a person we are now one handshake away from their entire network. Do not dismiss that person because 'we have nothing in common'. You have no idea who might be in that person's network.

# Secret 5. Give yourself the password to the network.

"Give yourself the password to the network—permission." This secret is important because increasingly we are living in our own little cocooned worlds. We don't speak to strangers and we may not even try to connect with people in our own offices. Don't believe it? This is a typical day in the life of a digital citizen.

#### **"THE COCOON OF ISOLATION"**

Martin leaves his house at 7 a.m., takes a cab to the airport on his way to an out-oftown conference. He does his emails in the taxi. The only thing he says to the driver is his destination and a distracted thank you when he receives his receipt.

At the airport he puts his ear buds in, uses the self-serve kiosk check-in and when getting his latte and muffin from the barista he doesn't even bother to remove his ear buds. He gets on the plane, doesn't acknowledge his seat mate in any manner and sits in silence throughout the flight.

He does the taxi/texting thing again, and checks into the hotel, ear buds back in. He doesn't call his kids, their iPhones go into voice mail all the time, (which they never replay) so he texts them goodnight.

The next morning he gets up, arrives at the conference, stands in line waiting for his registration information. He doesn't think to turn around and talk to the person behind in the line, gets his schedule and goes to his first session where he finds a seat at the back of the room. As the room fills up someone sits next to him, neither person acknowledges the other's presence. At the first coffee break, Martin stands in the corner and sends emails.

Maybe you can relate to this. It is more common than we think and shows how isolated we have all become and how we miss the opportunities that come from face-to-face connecting.



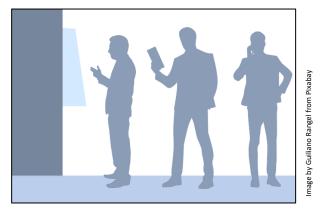


#### Martin and the "What If Factor™"

Why didn't Martin talk to anyone? Because he is perfectly normal. Over 80% of people have anxiety when it comes to talking to strangers. And, many don't see the value in it. Why would it matter if I spoke to someone sitting next to me for five hours? Here's the answer: beside the fact that it is just weird to **not** acknowledge another human being in such close proximity, you never know what might come from making that connection.

We call this the *What If Factor*<sup>™</sup>. We hear stories from people who got positions on boards (eventually becoming the chair of that board) because they started a conversation with their seatmate. John Hunter, the first story in Work the Pond! is a story of how simply turning around in a line resulted in a fantastic work contract three months later.

And it's amazing the number of stories we've heard over the years from people who met their mate by starting a conversation with a stranger—everything from borrowing a pen at a bus stop to stepping on someone's foot at a morning coffee line and buying him an apology coffee.



The question is, what if these people hadn't done these things. That opportunity would have passed them by. Poof. Gone. There's a 100% guarantee, if you do nothing, you are guaranteed that nothing will happen. Give yourself, and everyone you come into contact with, the password to the network—permission.

#### **Permission tips**

- Turn around in an airport line
- Smile and talk to others in your office elevator
- Get to events early, the best networking happens at the reception
- Say yes! Accept invitations.
- Step out of your comfort zone
- Have business cards and give them out

### Bottom Line: give yourself the password and give it to others.

Become more aware of the cocoon that we cloak ourselves in and break out of it.

# Secret 6. Learn the power of questions.

Invariably, when we poll our audiences the biggest challenge when it comes to networking is conversation (finding the time and networking anxiety are also in the top three). People want to know:

- How to start a conversation with a stranger
- What to say to keep the conversation going

The secret is to ask questions.

#### How to start a conversation

Recognize that starting a conversation with a stranger feels a bit uncomfortable, but small talk is an investment you have to make to begin engaging in a dialogue. If you get that person's business card it's even easier to do the 'small talk dance'.



This is not rocket science; simple questions work:

- 66
- Do you attend these events frequently? What are you hoping to learn from today's speaker?
- Tell me about your role at your organization?
- I can see we are in the same area of town, my office is two blocks away (discuss best restaurants, the commute, etc.)
- What's happening in your industry?

How to figure out what to say to continue the conversation

You've broken the ice with some small talk, now what? How do you develop a conversation of substance?

- Start by remembering the power of *Positive Networking*®, discovering what you can do for someone else. This is **a natural conversation starter** because you are trying to learn about the other person.
- Follow the thread of the conversation by asking questions to uncover more information. Most people stop asking questions too soon; be curious.
- Relax and listen to what they say. Often, when people are nervous they don't absorb what they've heard.
- A good question is very simple: it's when you care about the answer. That means focusing on the other person, acknowledging what they are saying, "You made a really good point, Nathan." (using the person's name in conversation helps you remember their name).



#### **"THERE'S A STORY"**

Gayle and Darcy were at a dinner where the chairman of a global bank was the afterdinner speaker. To Gayle's right was the retired local managing partner of an international accounting firm, and his wife. The couple seemed polite, but not much in the way of engaged and energetic conversationalists. So, Gayle just started asking questions, which is the secret of conversation. But, what to ask? She posed a question based on this thought: most accountants learn basically the same trade, some may be a bit smarter than others, but how did this one guy get to be the leader of this very successful firm and hold the position for over a decade?

His answer to her question was not particularly illuminating, "I had a mentor, I guess." But, that's when his wife leaned in and said, "it was because he knew everyone in the firm by name, knew their families and was interested in them." She went on to say that in the evening he would often come home, lugging a huge binder that contained the names and information on his hundreds of employees. He learned everyone's name!

That was an amazing leadership lesson. Imagine if you were working for a large firm and your leader got in the elevator and said hello to you, by name! Many senior leaders often get in the elevator, and don't even acknowledge their employees presence, let alone address them by name. What this tablemate's story illustrated was this: "It shows you are paying attention. It shows you care. It makes people feel valued."<sup>3</sup> Does it have an impact on employee morale. You bet.

Yes, Gayle could have spent her time on small talk with that couple, but by showing a genuine interest in her table mates, asking a 'non-fluff' question she learned an impressive leadership lesson. For the rest of the evening they had a wide-ranging conversation as a level of rapport and trust had been established between them.

#### Bottom Line: everyone has a story

It's that simple: Know that each person brings a valuable story to the conversation. Ask good questions and care about the answer.

<sup>3</sup> Geil Browning, June 7, 2012, How to Thank Your Employees in Only 8 Words, INC.



## Secret 7. Be there and know something.



People do business with those they **know**, trust and like. They recommend people they know, trust and like. You've learned the secret that trust comes from building positive "what-can-I-do-for you" relationships. The secrets that help *likeability* are when you are interested in the other person and have the skills of rapport and engaged conversation. And, people also have to 'know' you. That means showing up.

#### **Part One: Being there**

Most of us know we have to network-get out there and meet new people—and we have the best of intentions, but what happens? An email comes in on Monday, promoting an interesting luncheon speaker and you know it would be a great event. You've been to one of these luncheon events before and met really interesting people, so you plan to attend. You even put it in your calendar, but you don't buy a ticket yet. Tuesday you are still thinking about it but by mid-day Wednesday you are just too overwhelmed with work and you congratulate yourself for being smart enough to have not bought a ticket.



#### A habit that repeats

The problem with this little scenario is that it keeps repeating itself. There is almost always something that takes priority over networking in our busy 24/7 overloaded lifestyles. Networking needs to move up the list and one of the best ways to make this happen is to follow these few tips.

#### Make it a good habit

- Plan ahead, look online for events you want to attend and put them in your calendar.
- vice versa.
- You've got to eat lunch so use this as a time to reconnect with others.
- Have a budget to do these things. Build the cost of becoming a member of organizations and going to events into your business planning.

#### Part Two: Know something

Read, listen, seek out knowledge and share it. You might not think this is a secret of networking, but as Benjamin Franklin said, "It's hard for an empty bag to stand upright." It's hard to make an impression if you can't contribute to the conversation. Good networkers know what's going on—what's happening in the local business community, global business trends, social trends, politics and sports, even the ones they don't follow.

Why is this necessary? Even if hockey or local college football isn't your thing, not knowing that the local team won last night's game against their archrivals leaves you out of the conversation. Even if you don't do business in China or Spain, knowing what's happening with the Chinese economy, or youth employment in Spain simply means it's much easier to contribute to a conversation.

Every day try to get a snapshot of:

- What's happening locally and nationally with online or print newspapers.
- What's happening globally. We find that the Financial Times or The Economist gives a great synopsis, something that local papers don't provide.

• Invite a guest. You are less likely to cancel and it's a great way to stay connected. Plus, when you are at the event your guest will introduce you to their network and



What's happening in your industry or where you do business or want to do business? For example, if you are planning a business trip to Australia, make the Sydney Morning Herald your home page to get you up to speed. If Asia is your market, what's a paper you should read -- South China Morning Post?

#### Share what you've learned

Follow up is another big challenge that people tell us they have when it comes to networking. "How do I follow up?" "When do I follow up?" Here's our secret: we share stuff.

When we read an article, find a new website, read a post, we are always thinking, who would find this valuable? Sometimes we will send something because they have a personal interest. For example, one time on a flight across Canada, Gayle sat next to the president of a tech company who told her a story about how he and his wife have a thing about wasabi farms in Japan (it was a cool small-world story). It wasn't more than a few days later that Gayle saw an article about the first wasabi farm in Canada, so she simply sent the link to him. Why? It was a reminder of something they had talked about, and her guess was when he opened this email, he'd have a smile. It was a small **low-impact reconnecting** touch-point.

Of course, as Positive Networkers, there was also an opportunity to make a business connection between her seatmate and someone in her network so she followed up that way as well. That was a high-impact follow up.

#### Tips when sharing information

- If you are connecting two people, a person you have just met, and someone in your network, go to the person you know well and get their permission to connect them together. Then, make the connection.
- There's nothing more frustrating than someone sending you a 20-page PDF with a note, "you will really enjoy this." Instead, do the work for the person receiving this information. If the information is not too long, consider pasting the document into the email and highlighting something in the first few of paragraphs (we put in red) showing why this information would be helpful to them. They can take a quick scan and decide if they want to read on.

- If the information is PDF worthy (as in many pages) then copy and paste a email copy.

### Bottom Line: business is simple and networking is powerful

People do business with those they know, trust and like. People recommend people they know, trust and like<sup>™</sup>. All of the secrets we have shared help you as an individual to raise your profile, find more opportunities (right in front of you!), enhance your social intelligence and conversation skills, which all build trust and likeability. The result, you are a better brand ambassador for your company and your career. That's the power of *Positive Networking*<sup>®</sup>!

# SUMMARY – THE 7 SECRETS

- 2. Networking: it's not all about you.
- 4. Treat everyone as equals.
- 6. Learn the power of questions.
- 7. Be there and know something.

couple of key phrases that would appeal to the reader in first few lines of the

But, before you hit the SEND button ask yourself, "Is what I am about to send to this person going to add anything to their busy day. If not, don't hit SEND."

1. You have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince.

3. You get one chance to make a first impression.

5. Give everyone the password to the network.

- Gayle, Judy and Darcy

# **About Us**

Darcy Rezac, Judy Thomson and Gayle Hallgren-Rezac are co-authors of Work the Pond! Use the Power of Positive Networking to Leap Forward in Work and Life (Prentice Hall). This best-selling book has been called the "connectors handbook" by Town & Country magazine. It has been translated and published in China, Russia and Korea.

For close to two decades they have been teaching the skills of networking and connecting to corporations, associations, governments and graduate schools of business around the world.

Darcy is managing director emeritus of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and has held executive positions with the Canadian federal government, Alcan and General Motors. He has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as a networking expert.

Gayle is a writer, speaker, entrepreneur (founder, Cookies by George) and a recipient of a YWCA Women of Distinction award. Gayle is a member of the Davos



Circle, having attended the Annual World Economic Forum over eleven times, where networking happens at the highest level. She is also an expert on the "art of conversation", a subject she writes and speaks on frequently.

Judy is a CPA, CA who has held executive positions in human resources and administration with global companies in Canada and Asia. She was also part of the start-up management team and the first Director, Customer Services of the world-famous Rocky Mountaineer Railtours. Judy is an advocate for women in business and spent six years as the vice-chair of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade's Women's Leadership Circle® advisory council, six years as a director of the BC Women's Enterprise Centre and has ten years of corporate director experience in the public sector.

Now that you've read the **7 Secrets of Positive Networking**<sup>®</sup>, would you like to improve your face-to-face and virtual networking skills even more?



**Power of** *Positive Networking*<sup>®</sup> is like being immersed in a full-day workshop with two of Canada's top networking experts but done online and accessible 24/7 from any device.

Gayle and Judy have taken the extensive knowledge and experience they have gathered from teaching hundreds of in-person workshops and packed it into five hours of content that includes engaging videos, guizzes, and a workbook that will jumpstart your networking before the course is even over.

If networking is not your strong suit, this online course will change that.

If you are an experienced networker this online course will take your skills 'up a notch' and boost your strategic network.

Learn more: https://training.shepalearning.com/

Then check out our online course:

Power of *Positive Networking*®

# You may also be interested in these free downloads

# Share with the students in your life. **START NOW!** Students, don't wait to build your network.

We know that most students don't get serious about building a network until they start their job search... closer to graduation. But in a competitive job market building a network while at school gives you a head start. Plus, the people you meet there will be some of the best connections you make in life. This free eguide will tell you how to build your network now.

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# **TOP NETWORKING** CHALLENGES SOLVED!

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ren-Rezac, Judy Thomson & Darcy Rez Co-authors of Work the Pond

Jumpstart your career!

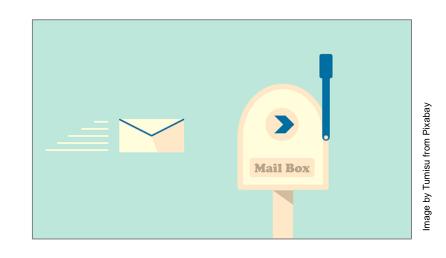


# For everyone who has a networking challenge or two.

# **Top Networking Challenges Solved!**

We took the top 10 networking challenges people have-everything from small talk, to exiting conversations gracefully, to finding the time to network-and answered them in this handy e-guide.

Please sign up for Shepa Learning Company's



You can sign up on our website here: https://shepalearning.com/business-networking-best-practices-resources/

Get it here: https://shepalearning.com/business-networking-best-practices-resources/

# Got 60 seconds

to improve your networking skills?

free weekly *Positive Networking*<sup>®</sup> Tip.

These awesome little tips are under 200 words, which means it takes about 60 seconds to read a tip.

They arrive in your email every Wednesday and are a great way to keep networking top of mind.