

TOP NETWORKING CHALLENGES SOLVED!



By Authors of *Work The Pond!*

Darcy Rezac, Judy Thomson, Gayle Hallgren-Rezac

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TACKLING YOUR TOP CHALLENGES

For the past two decades we have been doing networking surveys with our *Positive Networking*[®] workshop participants (thousands of responses!) and we've noticed three common themes when it comes to networking challenges:



Gayle Hallgren-Rezac, Judy Thomson
and Darcy Rezac

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1. Most people have anxiety around networking and/or fear of rejection.
2. Conversation is difficult – both small talk and how to create more engaged conversations.
3. Finding the time is hard.

This made us wonder if our almost 1,500 weekly *Positive Networking*[®] Tip readers had similar challenges, so we asked them to complete a brief survey on networking. It turns out their challenges **were** the same. And they even had a few new ones!

While we can't address all of the challenges here (we'll save some for our ongoing weekly tips), we have taken the top ten—as told to us in our tip reader's words—and provided answers.

Even if **you** don't have any of these networking challenges there is still value in reading this information (and sharing it). There will be people on your team, colleagues, friends and family who could use these answers.

In some cases we've added these kinds of answers:

Easiest: We've given you quick, easy solutions.

Awesome: We've given you suggestions on how to be a truly awesome networker or connector.

YOUR CHALLENGE #1

“I am extremely shy and introverty.”
“Being an introvert I am most comfortable in small groups or one-on-one.”



OUR ANSWER

If you are an introvert, or consider yourself shy, we know that the answers we will be giving you in this e-guide may be more difficult for you to put into practice. As best-selling author Susan Cain says in *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, a networking situation for an introvert is 'not their happy place.' While this may be true for you, it is possible to:

- adjust your perspective before you attend a networking event
- learn and use new skills while circulating with others at the event, and
- have a better understanding of your feelings when it's over.

As an introvert, approach networking by keeping the following in mind:

1. It's how you roll: Before networking remind yourself that being an introvert is not a disease. It's simply a preference in the way you engage with others. Recognize that situations where you need to connect with groups will push you outside your comfort zone, and that is OK. This may require a little self-talk, "Something great is going to come out of this event." Go to the event feeling confident about being a giver, not a taker (To learn more see our "7 Secrets of *Positive Networking*[®]" e-guide link on page 29).

2. You aren't the only one who feels this way: Research shows that one-third to half of people are introverts and 50% of the population has some form of anxiety around networking. Use this self-talk secret, "There are others in the room who feel the same way, maybe I can make them feel more comfortable."

3. You need a little down time: Introverts feel drained after networking in a large crowd of people. Give yourself permission to relax and recharge after an event.

Research shows one-third to half of the U.S. population are introverts.

DO YOU FEAR REJECTION?

Generally speaking introverts have a preference for being in quiet, minimally stimulating environments, while extroverts love the energy of a room full of people (“Let me at ‘em!”). And then there are ambiverts, those with a mixture of both introvert and extrovert traits. They can be outgoing in the right circumstances but do need alone time.

There’s some confusion around introversion and shyness. Typically, shy people have fear or anxiety around social interactions. It’s often stated that shy people fear rejection, but who doesn’t?

The three most important points we want to get across to people who feel they are introverts and/or shy are:

1. It does require you stepping out of your comfort zone, but that’s a good thing.
2. You are not the only one. Walk into any situation and a third to a half of the people in that room feel the same way.
3. Everyone gets rejected, even the pros. On the next page we share one of the most shocking rejection stories and how Darcy dealt with it.

NETWORK RULE NUMBER 7

As told by Darcy Rezac:

My own worst networking experience was a classic rejection story. When just starting my job at the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, I was invited to an event hosted by the stock exchange. I approached a high profile, somewhat flamboyant investment banker I had not yet met. I extended my hand and said, “Hello, I am Darcy Rezac. I am with the Board of Trade.” He replied, “Good for you,” turned and walked away. I was taken aback! It took me some time to come to grips with that put-down, until I learned Network Rule No. 7.

In their book, *The Art of Possibility*, Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander have a chapter on their Rule No. 6. In a nutshell, it states: “Don’t take yourself so damn seriously.” In other words, lighten up. It is great advice. It was the inspiration for my Network Rule No. 7. And before you ask—no, there are no other rules.

When you encounter a networking setback, as all good networkers surely will, deal with it this way: Get over it and move on. This is Network Rule No. 7, and here’s what I mean.

I came to understand that this investment banker had clearly decided that there was nothing I could ever do for him. That was his problem, not mine. Here was a person who had decided to move down the frog chain. Again, his decision, not mine.

Toads happen. You will have the misfortune of meeting them; my advice is to hop over them and move on.

—Excerpt from *Work The Pond!*

YOUR CHALLENGE #2

“Getting up the nerve to speak to strangers.”
“Gather enough courage to make the first move.”

Walking into that room!



OUR ANSWER

This is a mind over matter issue because there's an infinitesimally small chance that anything really awful is going to happen. You probably won't be struck by lightning. The floor won't open up and suck you into Middle Earth. Starting a conversation with a stranger is never a breeze, but what's the option? Standing alone is even more awkward.

When you make the first move, be prepared that it could go sideways. Sometimes people aren't pleased that you've approached them—even when they are standing alone! If they aren't welcoming, if they put up their 'wall', understand what's happening is at a neural level. Yes, at a neural level.

Daniel Goleman, author of *Social Intelligence*, explains it this way: "The brain's areas for movement and emotion are peppered with 'mirror neurons,' a class of brain cells that act like neural Wi-Fi. 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." When a person is not welcoming you probably react like most people: Your smile evaporates and you start thinking, "I wonder why they don't like me?"

Emotions are contagious and if you mirror the other person's behavior you've caught their negative virus. Instead, act confident, continue to smile, stay relaxed and maintain the conversation in a positive manner. Perhaps, change the topic of conversation. Your goal is to leave that person with a positive impression. By acting confident you will feel better, and you'll feel you are in control of the situation.

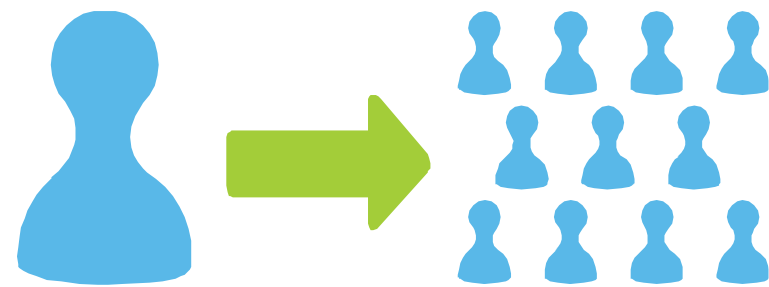
If you want to learn more about social intelligence and mirror neurons pick up Daniel Goleman's book, *Social Intelligence*.

Easier: Go with a tag teammate because it makes meeting strangers so much easier.

You probably won't be struck by lightning. The floor won't open up and suck you into Middle Earth.

YOUR CHALLENGE #3

“It's a challenge to break in and introduce yourself where there are cliques.”



OUR ANSWER

This is where confidence is a huge asset and confidence comes from a getting out there and practicing the face-to-face skills of networking. There is no substitute. Walk up to a friendly, open group (not one where you have to use a jack-hammer to break into the circle). Find an opening and try to make eye contact with someone. Look confident (even if you don't feel that way). When there is a break in the conversation, introduce yourself.

Yes, you can still be rejected (sorry, people still act like nerds in their cliques) but you won't take it personally. You've had too much success before.

***You won't take it personally.
You've had too much success.***

Easier: if you go with a tag teammate you can practice breaking into groups with your back up. Say to your tag teammate, "Wait here while I go try and break into that group. If it doesn't work, come rescue me." You'll discover that knowing you've got an escape hatch will give you more confidence.

Awesome: When someone is trying to join **your** group be the kind of *Positive Networker* that:

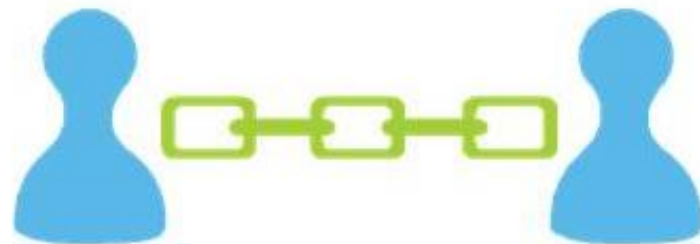
- Acknowledges that person immediately with a smile.
- Brings that person into the group when you find a break in the conversation, "Please join our conversation. Let me introduce you to everyone."

YOUR CHALLENGE #4

“I am not quick with small talk.”

“Struggle with small talk, if person I'm talking to is not ‘chatty’.”

Making that connection!



OUR ANSWER

We can relate! We've all started conversations, and then in the back of our mind have thought, “That was pretty lame. Seriously, I'm talking about the weather?”

Our first piece of advice is simple, whatever anyone has told you about some cool question you can ask to magically start a conversation with a stranger—well, sorry, it doesn't exist.

Understand that it feels awkward, but you've got to start somewhere. We suggest you simply start asking questions (not weird ones, instead logical ones, even weather and sports). The goal is to get people talking about themselves, what they do, their passions or interests. Once you achieve this, the conversation will begin to flow. Of course, people need to feel you are genuinely interested in them, and our Awesomeness advice will tell you how.

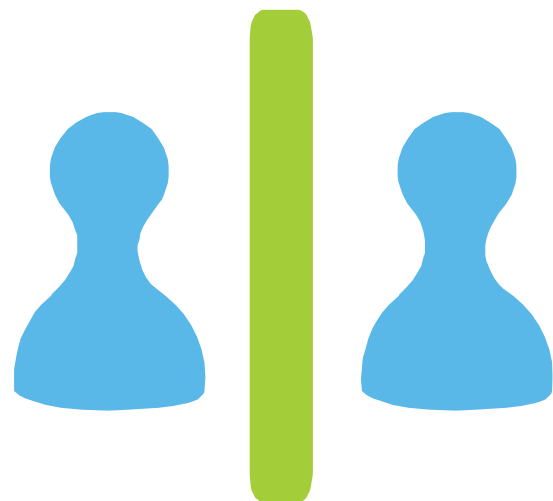
*Understand
that it feels
awkward...*

Awesomeness: If you enter every conversation with this attitude —everyone has a story— amazing things will happen. Our goal, when we start a conversation with a stranger, is to find **that story**. Incredible things have happened as a result of this belief.

YOUR CHALLENGE #5

“Conversational skills - I can generally carry/direct a conversation well but there are some people I am entirely awkward with and I cannot clearly identify why.”

Some people = awkward



OUR ANSWER

We like this question because it's something we have also experienced. Sometimes there's a you-can't-put-your-finger-on-it-kind-of-awkwardness, and it is a different feeling than talking to someone who is shy, or who gives one-word answers to your questions.

When this non-harmonic convergence happens you need to go up to 12,000 feet —our way of saying “move away from the emotion and analyze it.” Perhaps this person doesn't want to talk to you because:

- You can't do anything for them (they don't understand *Positive Networking*[®]).
- They think they are too high up the food chain for mere mortals.
- You are too high up the food chain and they are thinking “why would you talk to me?”
- Maybe it's nothing; you are just overthinking their reaction.

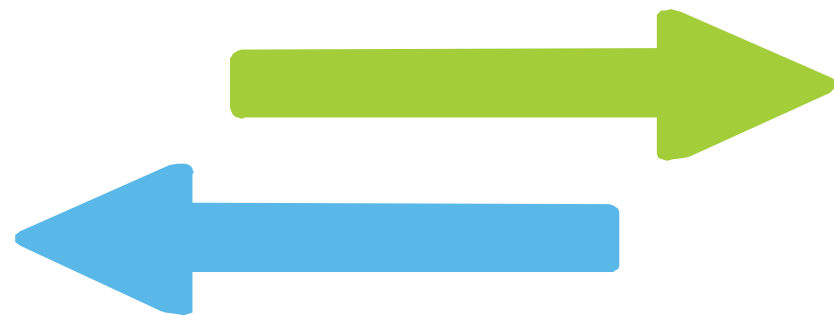
When this non-harmonic convergence happens you need to go up to 12,000 feet...

Our advice is to use your social intelligence skills (see Challenge #2). Remember, not all relationships will work. Don't invest too much energy in the outcome. Move on, gracefully. (It will feel better to you if **you** do the disengagement.)

YOUR CHALLENGE #6

“Exiting conversations gracefully.”

“Sometimes the ‘exiting’ of a conversation feels awkward. Suggestions on how to do this smoothly would be helpful.”



OUR ANSWER

Without fail, this is a question that is asked during our seminars and workshops, and we tell people that exiting a conversation is one of the harder things to do when circulating in ‘the pond’. We explain, “It requires a little bit of tough love.”

Find a moment in the conversation when you can change the subject. Let the other person know that you are going to move on. It’s important to wrap up the conversation nicely, “Natalie, I’m so glad I’ve learned more about your company. You’ve done some impressive things. You’ve really got a handle on social media. Thanks for your insight. It was great talking to you.” Shaking hands is a nice way of signing off.

“It’s a little bit of tough love.”

Of course, none of this exit dialogue will work if you haven’t been interested in Natalie, or if you’ve been scanning the room, planning your escape, while talking to her.

Easier: Rather than breaking off and leaving Natalie standing alone, suggest this, “Let’s go meet some other people.”

Awesomeness: if you see Natalie later in the event, and you think you’d like to introduce her to someone you know, be the Connector.

YOUR CHALLENGE #7

“Scheduling to attend an event due to time, and sometimes cost.”

“Finding the time when everything else seems to be a higher priority, especially at work.”



OUR ANSWER

You've actually answered part of this Time Challenge question –schedule it! Networking falls to the bottom of the priority list as work keeps piling on. It may be your best intention to do more networking, but unless you put it in your calendar it won't happen.

You can also improve your chances of not cancelling if you invite someone to accompany you. That doesn't mean you have to pay for them but making that commitment to go to the event with someone will keep you from cancelling.

The irony of this challenge is that investing time in building a network actually saves you time in the long run. That's because a network gives you access to resources, ideas, and solutions that you can tap into to help you to do your job more efficiently.

Regarding your challenge of cost, it's amazing what people will spend on their business, yet they won't spend \$50 for a chamber event, or \$250 to go to their local children's hospital fund-raising gala. It's an investment in your brand and reputation and keeps you top of mind with people in the business community. There are also many free or low-cost events where you can network. It does require doing some work on Google to find these events, but they are there if you look.

Investing in networking (time and money) is a key business development tactic: "People do business with those they know, trust and like. People recommend people they know, trust and like." You've got to become known. Be an ambassador for your brand.

Awesomeness: When doing your business planning, budget for networking events. And, to get the maximum impact from your networking efforts, don't just buy a ticket or pay the membership fee. Get the most out of this investment by showing up and getting involved. Volunteer your time.

You've got to become known; be an ambassador for your brand!

YOUR CHALLENGE #8

“Finding appropriate events to attend, things where I will likely meet people with whom I have something in common.”

“Finding groups that I ‘fit’ with.”



OUR ANSWER

With all of us being so time challenged, this is an important issue to address. Here are some questions worth asking yourself:

- What do I need most? Do I need a support network* or, do I need a network that will open me up to new opportunities?
- What's the most dynamic organization in my community?
- Where can I meet a diverse group of people? (A network of depth and breadth is important.)
- Ask someone you know who has a great network for advice (perhaps they'll invite you to an event).
- Who should be in my network but isn't; and where can I go to meet them?
- Where can I add value, and in the process raise my profile?

Keep going back—one event does not a network make.

Finding groups where you have a fit takes some time. Keep going back—one event does not a network make. By getting involved (volunteering on a committee) you'll build relationships quickly.

*Professional networks, women's networks, mentoring for students' networks, venture capital/angel investor networks, industry affiliations are examples of support networks. They are also great places to build your network.

YOUR CHALLENGE #9

“Follow up. Staying in Touch.”

“Maintaining Relationships.”



OUR ANSWER

Following up takes work and requires discipline and patience. Here are some things to consider when following up:

- When you meet someone, look for an opportunity to share some information at a later date. If you've been asking questions and are interested in them, you'll probably have enough knowledge so you can follow up with some topic you touched on.
- If you meet someone and want to follow up ask permission right then and there: "Would it be OK if I contacted you to discuss this further?"
- One of the easiest ways to follow up, if you don't have a specific reason, is to ask them to join you on LinkedIn with a personalized invite, "We met at the finance minister's speech on Friday—those were pretty amazing comments she made!"

Maintaining a relationship can seem onerous—it could be a life-long commitment! Here are some ideas to maintain relationships:

- Go back to the same events or organizations regularly. Face-to-face contact is the easiest way to build rapport and trust.
- Be a connector. Connect people in your network. Think about this all the time.
- Reach out. It could be simply, "How are things going?"
- Send holiday cards. "The season is the reason."
- Use social media to share ideas and information of value.

“If we spend little time interacting in social, business and community activities, our network won't disappear, but it will depreciate like any aging asset. Network interaction — especially where we add value through our ideas and support—helps maintain the asset.”

—Dr. Daniel Muzyka, retired CEO, Conference Board of Canada

YOUR CHALLENGE #10

“I don’t think I bring as much to the table as others.”

“Feeling that I don’t have something to contribute to the other person.”



OUR ANSWER

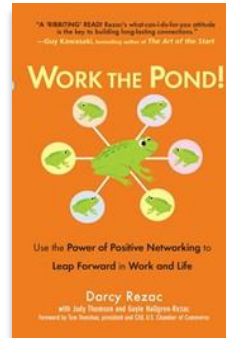
While this may seem like a rather shocking challenge, it is one that we often see in our anonymous surveys no matter what the level of experience. For us this challenge is different from the first challenge (shy/introverts) because we feel that this is a *perspective* challenge. It’s what Arianna Huffington calls your “obnoxious roommate living in your head.” Tune out that annoying and negative roommate and go into any networking situation with these mantras:

It’s what Arianna Huffington calls your “obnoxious roommate...”

- I will learn something new.
- I will meet interesting people (“Everyone has a story.”)
- I have something to offer.
- I am not selling myself; I’m here to discover how I can help others.
- I know there are other people who feel the same way, so I will make an effort to be more welcoming and more empathic when meeting people.

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.



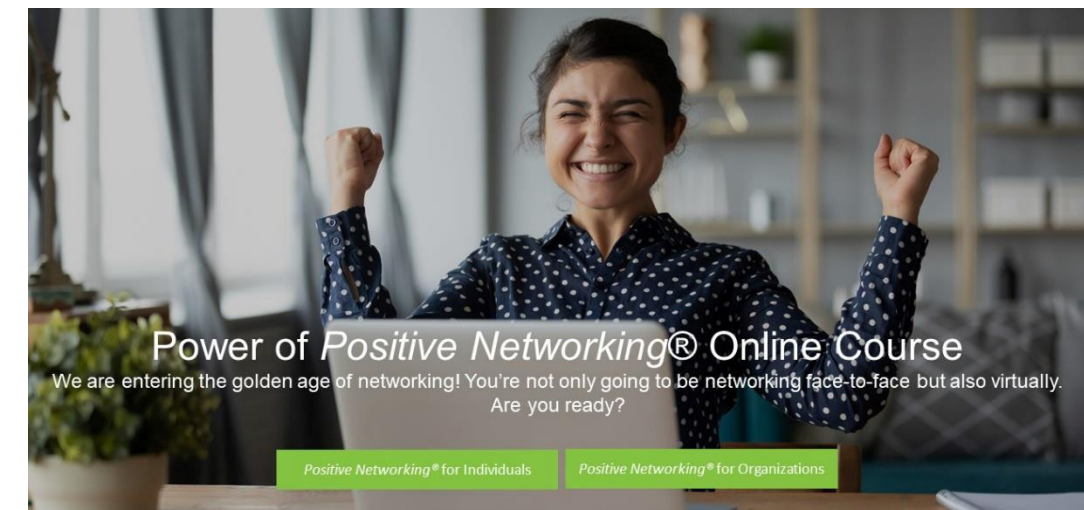
Gayle is a writer, speaker, entrepreneur (founder, Cookies by George) and a recipient of a *YWCA Women of Distinction* award. Gayle is a member of the Davos Circle, having attended the Annual World Economic Forum over eleven times, where networking happens at the highest level. She is also an expert 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 ***Top Networking Challenges Solved!*** would you like to improve your face-to-face and virtual networking skills even more?

Then check out our online course:

Power of Positive Networking®



Power of Positive Networking® 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 will make you a better networker (yes, even introverts) whether you are connecting face-to-face or virtually.

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.

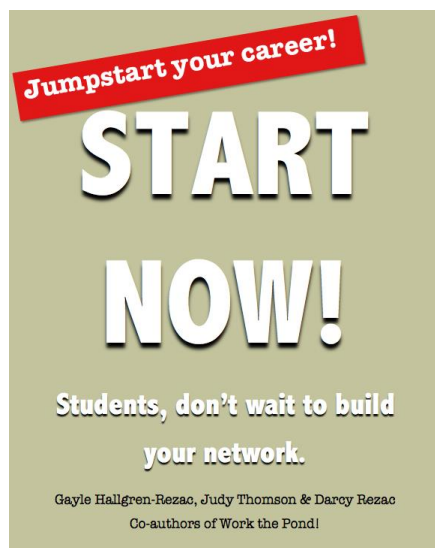
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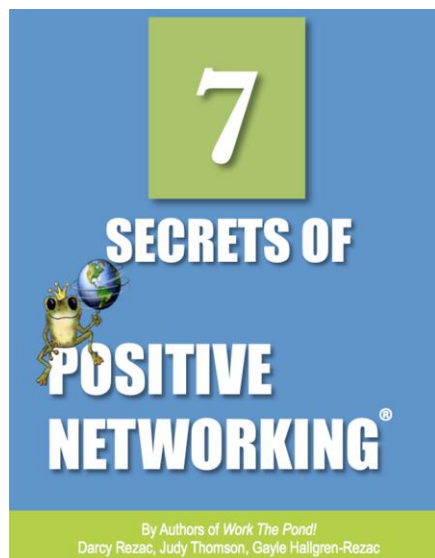


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For everyone in your life:

7 Secrets of Positive Networking®

Networking is not something we do "off the side of the desk". It's our focus—100%. This handy little guide gives you our seven secrets—yes "secrets". We think they must be secrets because it's surprising how often people don't use these simple techniques, skills, and tools to become better networkers and build better relationships.



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

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

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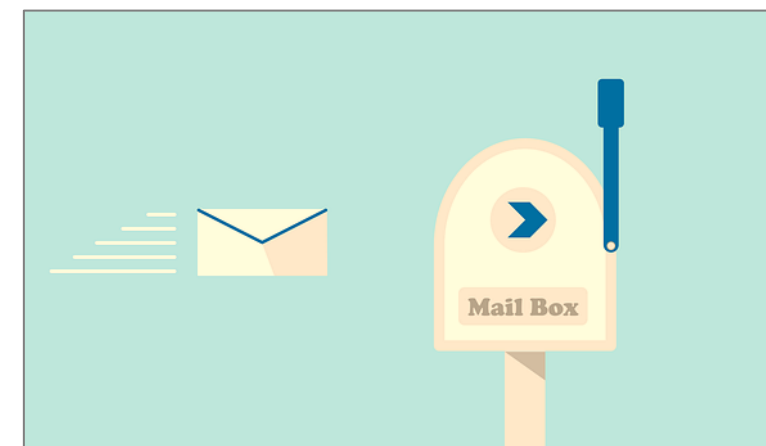


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