



- Advertisement -

Industry Viewpoint: New Year's Resolutions for relationship building

By

Lesley Daniels, account development director for the Healthy Family Project

December 30, 2021

No matter what segment of this industry you are in or the size of your business, building strong relationships with your colleagues is essential to your success and happiness. Networks can make or break our careers.

So after nearly two years of virtual work how are your relationships doing?

As an extrovert, I have never struggled to “get myself out there.” Being in large groups of people actually charges my battery. This has been a conversation throughout my career with some of my co-workers who would remark on my bubbly disposition at say a 7 a.m. breakfast meeting after a long night. For years, I have prided myself in my ability to make friends. So, it’s hard for me to disclose that the lack of in-person meetups this and last year was really hard on me. I know that my network is not the same. The airport chats, store walks and accidental collisions at trade shows disappeared and so did a large part of my pipeline and inspiration.

If you find yourself in a similar boat and maybe want to use this time of year to reset and create new intentions, I would like to share a few tips that I have or will be implementing this year to network differently.

Recognize remote networking takes more planning and effort. At in-person events, things will happen, and you will run into people and have more opportunities without much agenda. When I realized that it was harder for me to adjust without my regular travel circuit, a friend suggested I set up weekly coffee chats with people in my peripheral professional circles. Now my weekly meetings with people across many industries have created lasting relationships and mutual mentorships. Remember to set up these meetings with no expectations just as you would if you struck up a conversation with the person next to you at the keynote speaker breakfast. Just connect with good, smart people doing good, smart things.

Maximize any in-person socialization time. All right I will say it, this pandemic has made us all a little weird. People have gotten used to not inviting or attending meetings or events after COVID-19 and as a result, we must be very straightforward about wanting to connect with someone. If you are attending something in person or if you find your way into an office a few days a week you should never be eating lunch at your desk or hiding in the back of the discussion. Think about who you need to connect with and who you need to deepen your connections with and create time and space for those interactions to occur.

Use social media to the fullest. I know a certain someone on my team will beam while reading this next sentence. LinkedIn can be a great tool for social networking. Browse through your timeline and see what people are up to. If something sparks your interest, reach out directly and do more than

comment on their update. I know the struggles and imposter syndrome feelings that can creep up when we are put on a stage for all to see. Even as an extrovert who doesn't shy away from a microphone I freeze whenever I am asked to put my thoughts down on paper. To grow and connect in new ways we need to step outside of our comfort zones. For bonus points, I challenge you to arrange to meet with that connection for coffee or for a virtual call (with video) to discuss the article they wrote or to future develop the dialog they started.

Strengthen weak connections. Use this new time to strengthen weak or create entirely new relationships. We all suffered during the Zoom fatigue of 2020 and now I notice that it is increasingly common to leave our cameras off. If there is someone that you only have partially gotten to know, they came to a meeting once or you have just emailed, try suggesting a 20-minute Zoom call. You could say, "I am really making an effort to get to know people. Would you like to hop on a 20-minute zoom call with me so I can put a face to a name?" You will be surprised at how often people agree and how energized you will feel after the meeting.

Be authentic. Last but certainly not least, be who you are and accept others as they are. Find people and companies you feel a natural connection with or share a common passion or cause with. Reach out and get involved in the cause or volunteer effort and make some new connections while you are at it.

If we know each other reach out and let me know what you are doing. If we don't know each other, let's set up a zoom call to introduce ourselves.

[Print](#)