

# 21 Simple Tips and Tricks to Help You Connect

*(Some of Which May Surprise You!)*



Excerpted from *The Connectors: How the World's Most Successful Businesspeople Build Relationships and Win Clients for Life*, by Maribeth Kuzmeski  
(Wiley, September 2009, ISBN: 978-0-470-48818-8, \$22.95)

- 1 Share something personal.** When you share something that isn't about numbers and the bottom line with another individual (e.g., a story about parenting or your struggle to balance your job and your personal life), he'll be able to personally identify with you, and he'll become more invested in your goals and achievements.
- 2 Don't pretend to be perfect.** Everyone loves it when an underdog wins. It's natural to want to root for someone who faces the same challenges you do—so don't feel that your customers and colleagues have to believe that you're perfect!
- 3 Always say thank you.** Nobody makes it to the top on her own, so be sure to sincerely thank the people who have helped you succeed—no matter how large or small their contributions!
- 4 Pretend that every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that reads, "Make me feel important."** This was the life philosophy of Mary Kay Ash, the well-known cosmetics mogul. Her genuine concern for others catapulted her out of poverty and was the secret to her success.
- 5 Seek out a common interest.** People want others to be like them. Establishing that you and a client root for the same baseball team or volunteer at the same charity will go a long way in making you relevant in his eyes!
- 6 Don't work from a script.** Try to scrap the memorized pitch in favor of a more natural conversation. You'll seem more at ease and authentic—and your prospect will be less tempted to think that you're fluffing up the facts.
- 7 Remember the remarkable.** Entrepreneur Susan Bates makes a point to identify and write down the things that stand out to her in every conversation. She then references those statements in future interactions—and has been amazed by the reactions she's gotten when others realize that she has paid attention to and valued what they've said!

**8 Cultivate curiosity.** According to Lee Iacocca, former Chrysler CEO, “A leader has to show curiosity. He has to listen to people outside of the ‘Yes, sir’ crowd in his inner circle. Businesspeople need to listen at least as much as they need to talk. Too many people fail to realize that real communication goes in both directions.”

**9 Act like a good listener.** (Don’t let your body image betray you!) We’re constantly bombarded with information, so it’s almost instinctive to tune it out. When you’re interacting with someone, you need to consciously change your body language to reflect that you *want* to receive information; otherwise, it may appear that you’re trying to get away from it. Remember, your face says it all.

**10 Resist the urge to be a one-upper.** Perhaps you feel compelled to share that you battled the flu for twice as long as your colleague. Or maybe you’re dying to tell your client how great your vacation to Hawaii was after she mentions her trip to the lake. Three words: Don’t. Do. It. When you’re always trying to top other people, you’re ruining communication.

**11 Ask effective questions.** When you’re communicating, remember: garbage in, garbage out. If you ask the wrong questions, you’ll get the wrong answers—or at least different answers from the ones you were hoping for. Think about what you’re hoping to learn, and remember that an open-ended question is almost always more effective than one that elicits a simple “Yes” or “No” answer.

**12 Play dumb.** Socrates used this technique more than 2,300 years ago by feigning ignorance in order to encourage others to express their views fully. Today, many of the world’s most successful businesspeople do the same.

**13 Know your audience.** Whether you’re dealing with a colleague, boss, client, or recent acquaintance, it pays to do a little research. Once you know what a person wants, is interested in, and responds to, you’ll be better equipped to deliver just that.

**14 Remember, “When she cries, she buys.”** This is the motto of Wisconsin-based financial advisor Dale Froehlich, who closes over 90 percent of his sales. What he means by this is simple: Ask questions about something that’s close to the heart of the prospect (e.g., her children). Once she opens up to you, she trusts you. Then, she won’t want to go anywhere else.

**15 Give ‘em something to talk about.** Don’t assume that people talk about the things that are at the core of what your company provides. After all, those things are *supposed* to be there. However, people will remember and talk about the unexpected things that set you apart. It’s often the small things that get people talking. Wouldn’t it be nice if a store clerk gave you an extra 10 percent off your purchase for no particular reason, or if the restaurant manager threw in a free dessert?

**16 Let your passion shine through.** If you’re truly energetic and passionate about what you do, other people will notice. They may buy from you, they may talk about you, or they may follow your career—and they’ll definitely feel connected to you!

**17 Brand yourself.** You don't have to plaster your picture all over a billboard or give clients a smiling bobblehead version of yourself, but you should leave something behind with the people you encounter: a thought, a memory, or a connection. For example, one businessman who is very health-conscious focuses on his clients' overall well-being by incorporating healthy food, videos, books, and posters into his unrelated business offerings.

**18 Always take the high road.** All of us are faced with decisions that have ethical ramifications. You might have to think about containing costs, managing expectations, dealing with an error, or handling disagreements. Remember that it's a small world, and that you never know whose path you might cross or re-cross—so make sure you have nothing to be ashamed of.

**19 Lend a helping hand.** Don't be so focused on money that it's your only motivator. When you can afford to, help out your colleagues and clients even if you don't stand to gain anything material. What you will gain is even more valuable: respect and loyalty.

**20 Stay in touch.** It's important to stay in contact with everyone in your network. Implement a system that helps you consistently reach out to all of your business acquaintances. Even if you're just saying hello, you'll stay on their radars!

**21 Take a cue from plastic wrap: Be transparent!** Always make sure that your employees and colleagues are aware of what's going on in your company. If you are up-front about your decision-making processes, goals, and company news, you'll earn everyone's trust, and they'll be more willing to unreservedly work for you and with you. Remember, honesty is the sign of a healthy company.

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#### **About the Author:**

Maribeth Kuzmeski is the founder of Red Zone Marketing, LLC, which consults to Fortune 500 firms on strategic marketing planning and business growth. Maribeth has personally consulted with some of the world's most successful CEOs, entrepreneurs, and professionals. An internationally recognized speaker, she shares the tactics that businesspeople use today to create more sustainable business relationships, sales and marketing successes.

Maribeth is the author of four books, including, *The Connectors: How the World's Most Successful Businesspeople Build Relationships and Win Clients for Life*. She has frequently appeared on TV and radio, and has written articles on marketing strategies for hundreds of publications including *BusinessWeek* and *Entrepreneur*. She regularly speaks to audiences on topics

relating to business development, marketing, and sales strategies.

Maribeth graduated with a degree in journalism from Syracuse University and has an MBA from George Washington University. She lives in the Chicago, Illinois, area with her husband and two teenagers.

**About the Book:**

*The Connectors: How the World's Most Successful Businesspeople Build Relationships and Win Clients for Life* (Wiley, September 2009, ISBN: 978-0-470-48818-8, \$22.95) is available at bookstores nationwide, major online booksellers, or directly from the publisher by calling 800-225-5945. In Canada, call 800-567-4797.

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