



The scary world of networking

[by Michael Kinsman]

Letters, e-mails and phone calls regularly pour in with one common theme: I've sent out resumes to dozens of companies, I have posted my resume on online sites all over the Web and I still can't find a job.

It'd be nice if that were all we had to do to get a job.

But it isn't that simple.

We tend to call the task "job hunting" yet that gives the impression that each of us pursues a job with a big bull's-eye on it. While that might be the case for some, most of us happen into jobs that develop right in front of us.

The way we get jobs is to try to match our education, talent and training to particular fields. We hope that our backgrounds will be a suitable match for the job that someone out there has created. We might better describe this task as "job farming," where we have spread our seeds, hoping that a job might sprout from one of them some day.

This is part of the process that we call networking, an essential component of everyone's job search.

I'm a fine one to talk. I'm not very good at networking. In fact, I cringe when I hear the word.

I immediately conjure up a setting where I am at a professional meeting or cocktail reception surrounded by dozens of other people who I may or may not like, yet I know one of them might just have valuable information for me.

Yet, instead of aggressively pursuing that one individual, I chat with a handful of people, choosing to talk to them because they were standing next to me or because they looked as out of place as I feel. Eventually, I'll have my fill of aimless conversations and head home.

That just doesn't accomplish much. But because I know I'm not good at networking, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now, Jeff Taylor, the insightful and driven founder of Monster.com, and career transition coach Doug Harvey tell people like me what we've been doing wrong in their new book, "Monster Careers": Networking" (Penguin; \$15).

They have taken what many of us consider an unsavory part of the job search and explain it in a manner that makes it at once important, valuable and almost effortless.

It all starts with recognizing yourself. Taylor and Harvey define four basic personality types among us.

- The Swan: Introverted and quiet, the Swan craves one meaningful conversation than a lot of small talk.

- The Butterfly: This individual meets new people all the time, but doesn't quite know how to develop deep work relationships.

- The Dolphin: This is the natural of the networkers, able to balance meeting new people and developing established relationships.

- The Lion: This individual is so focused on developing deep work relationships that they overlook many opportunities to expand their networks.

The book also provides a series of examples and exercises to help us become better at networking. They offer us ways to find our way outside of self-imposed boundaries, how to be comfortable working a room or deal-

ing with someone face to face, how to steer around potholes and roadblocks and how to use networking to our advantage in all facets of life.

Networking can be painless, they say. It can be natural. It can occur at any instance. But we as individuals must take the initiative to recognize the opportunities that are in front of us.

I recently got a call from a friend who described a book project an artist friend of his had envisioned. As he described it, it was an intriguing project, one that would be educational and intellectually challenging, yet one that clearly would address an untapped market.

After describing this project, my friend said the artist needed a partner to complete the project and that he had immediately thought of me.

I found myself beginning to protest, but I stopped. I have great respect for my friend and for the way he approaches projects. I realized that he was trying to help one friend with a project by turning to another friend who he thought had the required tools and talents for the job at hand.

All of a sudden, I realized that I was being "networked" and now it was up to me to pursue the connection.

Networking? Me? Hmm, maybe it's not so bad after all.

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