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The Definitive Guide to NetWeaving vs. Networking

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I've heard many people saying that networking doesn't work, that people will not just help you, that of course you lose touch with those you've worked with years before at other companies, that they don't understand how to get warm introductions for business. The fact is that many simply do not possess the skills and knowledge to facilitate an effective and painless network. Additionally, C-level and senior executives are often unaware of another powerful communication method that complements and enhances the benefits of networking: NetWeaving.

Using both strategies, [I have built teams](#) on six continents and scaled dozens of companies to reach six, seven, and eight-figure sales, including being part of dozens of acquisitions and even an IPO..

Have you ever wondered why networking doesn't work? This definitive guide details everything you need to know about networking and **NetWeaving** to achieve relative success.



Networking

From striking conversations at cocktail parties to handing out business cards, so much business hinges on networking practices. It's also the default tactic career and executive coaches recommend, yet also frequently fails to establish real relationships.

But developing an in-depth understanding of the traditional approach and its origins will allow you to practice networking —and NetWeaving— more efficiently.

The Definition of Networking

[Networking](#) is the informal process of exchanging information and building relationships between individuals with common business-related interests. Networking offers many benefits, but any successful implementation of this tactic is incomplete without understanding NetWeaving.

While not explicitly stated, networking is often self-focused. When focused on networking, you are building relationships and helping others with the end goal of those individuals helping you in the future. At its core, networking has a “what’s in it for me” mentality.

Benefits of Networking

Networking is an invaluable tool for business and personal success.

As a self-promotional practice, it facilitates business exposure and widens your audience (and customer base).

But there are [several additional benefits](#) to networking.

- It highlights both your business and your expertise. Individuals seeking publicity strengthen their brand's presence and visibility and create more opportunities for their companies and their personal brand.
- Networking expands your access to resources. In building relationships with other professionals, you gain sources of information and expertise.
- It promotes growth. When you discuss ideas with others, you enhance your creativity and problem-solving abilities.
- It does help others. The best networkers do find ways to help others with their individual needs and missions. It is not possible to be a successful long-term networker without also identifying ways to help others and following up on those, even if it tends to be limited to those that can best help you.

Tips To Networking Effectively

There are several strategies you can use to leverage your people skills in the interest of your business.

Attend Industry Events and Be Part of Professional Organizations

To ensure that you have the opportunities to establish trusted relationships, ensure that you frequently and regularly attend industry events. Join social networks to find local and remote events or corporate meetings, and plan for your attendance.

Get a Business Card

Obtain—and use—business cards to strengthen your social ties.

A business card is a physical reminder of your encounter and helps to promote your brand.

I like to take notes on the back of the person's card that I later use to follow up for immediate introductions and to add to my personal CRM for NetWeaving connections in the future.

Have a Good Conversation and Try To Find Common Ground

Leverage your social skills to engage your conversational partner and find common ground. A tedious or unpleasant conversation will negate your efforts, so ensure that you prepare with pertinent topics and questions.

Reach Out to People on LinkedIn

LinkedIn remains a time-tested solution for those who prefer digital networking.

Send personalized notes to relevant individuals and embed any knowledge and third-party connections that may benefit the person you are connecting with.



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With so many people using automation tools on LinkedIn with generic messages, a personalized message where you do not try to “sell” the person anything truly stands out.

I’ve made some incredible and long-lasting relationships simply by finding and reaching out to other Kappa Sigma alumni in senior leadership roles, in private equity, and in venture capital. These have given me so many opportunities to help others over the years and have likewise opened doors for me for full-time, consulting, and public speaking opportunities.

Add Them to Your Personal CRM

Staying organized is crucial to sustained effectiveness in networking.

Add your new contacts to your CRM and maintain detailed notes on their present and future business and personal goals to nurture your following conversation.

Example of Networking

There are many [successful examples](#) of effective networking.

Consider Ann Baker, a former Advertising Traffic Manager for digital company RealNetworks—now a diplomat on Capitol Hill.

Determined to transition to politics, Baker contacted Senator Maria Cantwell with a personalized e-mail. Senator Cantwell invited Ann to visit at her next opportunity—but she immediately booked a flight to D.C.

She established a warm rapport with her interviewer, and the two bonded over shared linguistic interests. Ann was eventually hired and became a diplomat because of her networking capabilities.

NetWeaving

Networking is incomplete without NetWeaving. Though each practice has different features and requisite skills, the two are complementary.

NetWeaving is a relatively new approach to building meaningful business and personal relationships that refers to the practice of building business relationships with the needs and interests of others in mind.

The Definition of NetWeaving

[NetWeaving](#) is the practice of leveraging one's experience and expertise to help others achieve their goals. It is related to networking but differs in both its approach and its actions.

[Many define it](#) as an "others-first" approach to building and fostering business relationships—in contrast to networking, with hinges on self-promotion.

Author and finance expert [Bob Littell](#) coined the term to challenge the self-promotional aspect of networking and wrote the first book on the concept. Though he celebrates the advantages of NetWeaving, Littell argues that both practices are necessary for success.

Effective NetWeavers:

- Know to listen for opportunities to help others.
- Ask questions to elicit valuable information.
- Leverage their people skills to bring others together.

The Net Weaver's Creed

I will constantly be on the lookout for opportunities to put people together in win/win relationship without concern for what I will get out of it.

I will shift from thinking about WIIFM (What's In It For ME) to WIIFY (What's In It For YOU).

I will learn to be a resource for others, both regarding the types of information I can provide as well as to surround myself with resource contacts who can be of service to those with whom I come in contact.

I will apply the principles of NetWeaving on a daily basis and will make a habit of doing those things that will allow me to best implement NetWeaving strategies.

I will become an outspoken "NetWeaving" ambassador realizing that this will not only help others learn the joys and benefits of NetWeaving but that it will reflect positively back on me as well.

– Bob Littell, Chief NetWeaver

Benefits of NetWeaving

NetWeaving offers [many valuable benefits](#) to individuals and the people they connect with.

- NetWeaving resolves many of the challenges of networking. It eliminates the superficial, self-centered element of networking and promotes empathy and mutual understanding.
- It supports introverts in developing interpersonal skills, building confidence, and leveraging their ability to listen to others.
- NetWeaving enhances a person's credibility and attractiveness to others. When you build a reputation based on generosity, people—and opportunities—gravitate to you.

NetWeaving Skills

NetWeaving [depends upon helpfulness](#) and consideration for others. NetWeavers are givers rather than takers. They acknowledge that helping others may aid them at some point, but a personal benefit is neither expected nor required.

To use this networking approach, you must exercise creative thinking and flexibility. You have something to offer everyone—you just have to identify their needs.

NetWeavers know to ask questions and remember critical details. As an example, when my daughter turned one, three individuals sent me messages near her birthday with a special note of congratulations and a reminder to cherish this time from 0-4 years-old. This was both incredibly touching as well as great examples of how to follow-up.

NetWeavers keep their contacts organized and remain consistent in building connections and communicating with other business and community leaders.



Tips To NetWeave Effectively

An effective NetWeaver doesn't have to be extroverted or charismatic. Introverts and those with less need for social energy (Birkman term) often thrive in NetWeaving.

Give Rather Than Take

NetWeaving is all about offering services to others. Be helpful in any way you can, and continue to think of ways to support others.

Exercise empathy and ask questions to determine the needs of others. Make notes and follow up, even if months or years later.

Be Curious About Those You Meet

Ask questions. If this is difficult for you, hang out with those that are skilled at it. Watch them, listen to how they approach people with genuine curiosity, and then find ways to practice these techniques in the future.

I can truly say that I have learned more about asking questions from being friends with Ashish Thakur, John Field, and Regi Campbell than I have from any book, seminar, workshop, or class. Without a doubt, you know that they want to know you and are open to helping when you speak with them.

Be a Helpful Resource to Others

You always have something to offer. Your first interaction should hinge on your offer to provide expertise, resources, or connections to your partner.

If you can't immediately help them as a resource provider, make a note of their needs and brainstorm later on.

Offer To Connect People and Make Introductions

As with networking, effective NetWeaving depends upon one's ability to plan interactions and organize contacts.

Approach each interaction with the explicit intention of offering another person your skills and expertise. This does not mean "look for something to sell them". Determine who else might benefit from meeting this person.

Set Aside Ten Minutes for Each Introduction

Networking doesn't end after your first encounter.

For best results, follow up with a conversation by setting aside 10 minutes—or more—and introduce your interlocutor to other relevant individuals that will benefit the other person.



Provide Guidance, Service, and Mentorship

If you cannot offer resources, consider offering guidance and advice.

Reach out to less experienced members of your business community to offer your mentorship or broker a breakfast/lunch with someone you know that is 10-20 years further in this person's career/business.

Be a Servant Leader

[Servant leadership](#) prioritizes the development of others over your own (or that of your business).

Think of how you can help someone excel in their field or build contacts. Focus on how your personal integrity and core values can serve the broader community.

The most crucial facet of NetWeaving—and its most significant challenge to networking—is placing the interests of others before one's own. Having practiced NetWeaving for decades and helped others grow in this approach to relationships, I like to think of NetWeaving as what naturally happens when an [intentional servant leader](#) meets others.

Be Active in Your Church, Synagogue, Temple, Mosque, Shul, or Tabernacle

I've often found some of my longest lasting relationships and best opportunities to help others have come from the churches and parachurch organizations I have been active in over the years.

This means doing more than attending or being a member. Simply attending makes you a consumer. These organizations have many needs. Some are big and public-facing roles and others are quite behind the scenes, yet crucial to the organization (e.g. directing traffic for parking, showing up at 4:30am to open for a men's group, serving in the kitchen at a women's conference, etc.).



Many of those I have met and served with at Radical Mentoring, The Moody Church, Johson Ferry Baptist Church, and others have gone out of their way to find ways to help me both professionally and personally. Likewise, the people I have met during “shoulder to shoulder” time have offered a multitude of opportunities for me to help others that would not have been uncovered without our time together.

Example of NetWeaving

NetWeaving expert [Bob Littell](#) tells a story that perfectly exemplifies the benefits of NetWeaving.

He attended a talk by military General Norman Schwarzkopf and a young woman—Nancy Richardson— nervously expressed her pride at having served under him, as did her sister and husband, who were also veterans of the United States Air Force.

She then inquired what guidance parents should provide our daughters and sons who will become the future leaders of this country. Norm, as he likes to be called now in his retirement, said, tell them “it's ok to do your own thing, but do it +1.” He then went on to explain that the “plus one” meant to help someone else up a hill; intentionally be the leader, keep growing, and stay one step ahead in aiding them toward their accomplishments. This is the advice he had given and modeled for his own children.

She wished she could have been in her service uniform to honor him with a salute, yet also lamented that security protocols even prohibited an ordinary handshake, as organizers had previously announced that Secret Service had been advised to “tackle and subdue” anyone coming within the security perimeter.

After their brief exchange, General Schwarzkopf asked her to come forward to join him on stage.

As she confidently marched 40 feet to the stage, an overwhelming silence enveloped the room. General Schwarzkopf directed her to salute him and without hesitation, she did. Returning it in kind, he beamed a smile as he shook her hand before finally asking for permission to hug her – which she happily accepted. There may not have been a dry eye in the building.

This story illustrates the mutual benefits of NetWeaving; all parties involved benefited from the warm interactions, guidance on how to aid others, publicity, and job opportunities the interaction generated.

Networking vs. Netweaving: How Do They Compare?

Although NetWeaving is the converse of networking, the two practices work best practiced together.

Definition and Meaning

While networking is a process of mining social contacts for far-reaching potential resources, NetWeaving allows others to access one's own resources and expertise.

Ultimately, the two practices are like the ocean's tides: two parts of the same whole.

Objective and Focus

Networking asks, "how can you help me?" To that end, the objective of networking is to assess another person's viability as a business partner or prospective client, whether done consciously or unconsciously.

NetWeaving, however, hinges on the question, "how can I help you?" NetWeavers focus on serving others and trusting in the long-term benefits of the approach.

Skills Essential for Success

Success in networking depends upon one's charisma, career skills, and interpersonal skills. Networkers promote their brand effectively and leverage social situations to generate benefits for themselves and their companies.

NetWeaving hinges on helpfulness and concern for others. It is about networking with intention and compassion.

Nature of the Relationship

While networking is a transactional process, NetWeaving is an approach that promotes long-term, win-win relationships.

Networking interactions rely on interpersonal skills and communication skills that promote exchanging goods or services.

On the flip side, NetWeaving contacts are mutually beneficial and build trust and credibility over the long term with a focus on helpfulness, a give rather than take approach, and concern for others.

Networking and NetWeaving Skills

To network effectively and to become a networking expert, one must possess specific [skills](#).

To start, you must possess the intention and motivation to seek personal connections. Your choice determines how much effort you will put into developing those relationships and often dictates your success.

Networking is a never-ending process, and one must exercise patience and determination in ceaselessly building connections.

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Effective networkers prepare for events and interactions by:

- Researching the business achievements and career paths of potential partners, business clients, and mentors.
- Determining potential business opportunities.
- Compiling notes and questions prior to the event.
- Accumulating knowledge about the personal lives of possible connections and making notes in a trusted system (e.g. CRM).

Networking also demands [interpersonal skills](#). These need not be inherent traits—many people can develop strong social skills through practice—but strong communication is at the core of networking.

Lastly, networking demands persistence, flexibility, and organization. To preserve valuable networks, you need to nurture and pursue collaborative relationships. You must remain flexible to changing conditions and social ties.

Effective networkers organize their contacts appropriately and update them as necessary. Establishing the initial connection is only the beginning.

On the other hand, NetWeaving relies primarily upon [three discrete skills](#):

- Assessing the needs and interests of others and prioritizing them.
- Offering one's capabilities and expertise to others and developing a “giving” mentality.
- Building a deep and vast network of trusted sources.

FAQs

Do you still have questions about NetWeaving and how you can pay it forward while networking?

How did NetWeaving originate?

[Bob Littell](#) first developed the concept of NetWeaving over a decade ago. He claims he merely gave name to a practice that many already use.

How can you NetWeave effectively?

The best way to NetWeave effectively is by approaching others without self-interest and practicing characteristics of empathy. NetWeaving skills come with practice.

What works better — networking or NetWeaving?

Although NetWeaving may generate longer-lasting relationships and promote trust, networking is also a valuable business strategy. Both are necessary for building connections in business.

Are there organizations that focus on NetWeaving?

Several organizations focus on NetWeaving. [CEO Netweavers](#) in Atlanta and Houston offers event opportunities and mentorship programs.

[NetWeaver Network](#) is a training organization that helps individuals and companies build netweaving capabilities.

KURT UHLIR

Kurt is a successful entrepreneur that's been called "the 10x operator and revenue leader for high-growth companies". His focus on high-achieving servant leadership is known for unlocking personal, team, and company growth not possible with other leadership styles.

He has built and run businesses from start-up to those with over \$500M annual revenue, assembled teams across six continents, been part of the small team launching an IPO (\$880M), and been part of multiple acquisitions.

Kurt has led teams at both large companies and startups through international expansion and unlocking hypergrowth. One company was NAVTEQ (now called HERE Technologies), which the team took public and later sold to Nokia for \$8.1 billion. Another company was Vitruve (acquired by Oracle). Another was Sideqik, one of the first influencer marketing platforms.

He is the lead inventor of disruptive technologies in 5 industries, with 16 granted patents, and has been asked to advise thousands of leaders, from startup founders to the President of the United States.

Read more of his journey at <https://kurtuhlir.com/about/>