

Bits and Bytes Association Newsletter

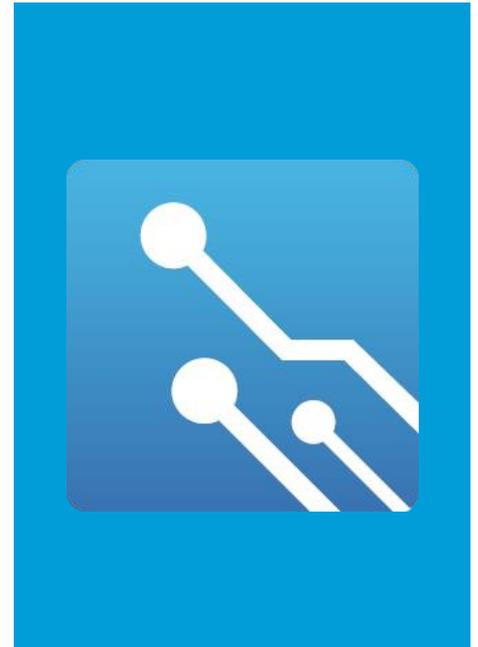
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Networking Your Way into a Tech Company

Business networking is a very important tool in the modern business environment. Stakeholders, management, employees, new graduates are all connected to each other through networks. Social media and online job boards have eliminated the legwork of finding a job, but this new age of building relationships comes with new challenges. Here, we explore some of the benefits of building a network and provide our top tips to guide you along the way.

The Power of References

Picture this: a company piques your interest, and you instantly consider sending out communication. You spend hours editing your resume to make it stand out in the pile of resumes the company has already received from hopefuls. Realistically, your resume only has a small chance of capturing the interest of the employer to give you a shot at an interview. So how do you overcome those odds? There are several ways to bypass the most difficult stage of the application process and get your resume in the hands of the hiring manager:

- Understand the power of references. Strong references and professional networks lend you credibility.
- Many employers prefer candidates that have a connection to the company, even a minor connection with an employee working at the company is valuable.
- Your connection can alert you to new job postings or recommend you to a recruiter.
- A reference helps paint a better picture of you than a resume alone.

Building Connections

So how exactly can these connections be built? The answer lies in organization. Start your networking process off by grouping your contacts into lists:

- Active ties - Connections you know personally
- Dormant ties - Connections you have lost touch with
- College alumni
- Connections you want to build

Maintain a relationship with your active ties even if they work in a non tech role for a tech company. Chances are they can get you in touch with their own active ties - people they work with at their company in tech roles.



Dormant ties, or acquaintances who started working in a tech role after you lost touch with them, are highly underrated. However, your approach to this group of people will vary from your other groups. At the first line of communication, re-introduce yourself and reference events in your life that you know them from. Make the interaction personal and use your soft skills to reignite your previously established relationship with the person.

Your college alumni should be one of your most desirable potential connections. You have more in common with them due to your shared academic experiences. Having attended the same school can act as a great ice breaker when you introduce yourself and sharing an academic background with a successful industry professional can lend weight to your academic credentials.

For connections you want to build, think about where you see yourself in your career. Connect with individuals in your target company, working in roles that catch your interest.

After creating your lists, determine how you want to reach out to your target professionals. Remember that people have contact preferences. Be prepared to reach out through LinkedIn, email, and even text or phone call.

Your First Networking Message

The first and foremost step to take before preparing your first line of communication is to carry out in-depth research on your target contact. Gain insight into who they are, notice what you might talk about, and especially be prepared to bring up common connections.

Next, start with an introduction. Tell them about your profile and let them know how you got connected in the first place. Remember that you need to position yourself as a desirable working partner, someone who can provide benefit to the connection and not just someone looking for free favors. Never start out by asking for a job interview, rather ask for advice and insight. Maintain a friendly and conversational tone and use formal language. Remember to address the loss of connection when re-connecting with a dormant tie.

The Next Stage

Pop up the question about the hiring situation at their company. Whether they are hiring or not, maintain the same attitude and show gratitude for the advice and insights that your connections have shared with you. Offer to keep in touch and follow them on their social media platforms. Show an interest in their career development and personal achievements that they post about, and make sure they follow your career too. You have now built a new connection that might help you climb up the ladder in your career.

Even if you don't achieve your desired results right away, an extensive network can eventually provide new job opportunities, lead to advancement, help you get into new fields of work that might interest you, and enable personal or professional improvement. Remember, the most difficult part of networking is taking the initiative and taking the first step. Networking will be your gateway to your target career.



“*The 11 Laws of Likability*” by Michelle Tillis Lederman: A Summary of Key Ideas

In her book, “*The 11 Laws of Likability*”, Michelle Tillis Lederman reveals eleven laws that can uncover what is inherently likeable within you while staying authentic to your true self. She helps create honest and enjoyable interactions that can build better, more meaningful connections. Lederman’s book is a must read for anyone interested in creating networks that can lead to personal and professional improvement. In this review, we will discuss some of the insights uncovered in this great find.

The Importance of Staying Curious

Lederman dives into human psychology to help the reader unlock the true value of their ability to ask curious questions. She draws attention to the fact that that given the chance, people would talk for hours. People love to talk. The catch is to know what gets them going. Showing genuine interest in someone’s professional and personal life can lead to creating meaningful connections. It also brings out the best in us.

“Curiosity may have killed the cat, but I can tell you it never killed a conversation.”

Maintaining good eye contact, appropriate head nods, interesting follow up questions are all likeable traits that indicate curiosity, and thus likeability. Your curiosity removes distractions and allows you to connect. Just being authentic to your natural desire to know more about a person will help you carry on great conversations.

The Contagious Nature of Energy

Energy is derived from your mood in an environment and is reflected in your reactions to that environment. People will subconsciously read your energy - it’s only nature. The signals you give people, like your body language, facial expressions, hand movements, stance and even your breathing, will depict the state of your energy. This then turns into contagion. With your energy, you can energize or deflate those around you. Ask yourself, do you want to contribute to productivity or confusion? However, projecting good energy doesn’t mean you have to be cheerleading your way through a conversation. Authentic and respectful positive energy goes a long way in a conversation.

Lederman’s laws explore many facets of everyday interactions like similarity, perception, self-image, patience and more. She implores you to shift your thinking from:

- “Me” to “Them”
- “Work” to “Any Topic”
- “Now” to “Long-term”

Michelle Lederman reveals the essential truth about building meaningful connections. The book is a must-read for any individual who is on a journey to realize: “*It’s not about you – it’s about the relationship*”, whilst remaining honest to their character and identity.



Directions 2022: An Interview with Jose Manuel Castellon Alvarez, Andrea McCann-Suchower and Raeanne Hébert

The Bits and Bytes Association had the opportunity to sit down with the Directions 2022 team to gain insights into the most anticipated Red River College Polytechnic event of the year, which is back in person this year at the RBC convention center on November 3rd.

What is the Directions Conference?

Raeanne: The Directions conference is an event where we bring many industry professionals into one building. It's not a job fair, more so an opportunity to have informational interviews. The industry professionals want to connect, they're looking for the best individuals that will be the future of the industry. We're going to have 135 to 150 professionals that are coming in on their own time because they want to be part of the community.

Manuel: We wanted to create an inclusive networking event, that makes everyone involved comfortable. This conference just answers the new graduate's question: "Tell me about the options I have." The event is a huge opportunity for students to explore their options and prepare for industry.

What led to the development of the Directions Conference?

Andrea: The event started out with a small group of instructors and the students wanted to join in. It's turned into something bigger than we ever imagined. It's grown to the point that we're at the RBC Convention Centre. We've had a great fundraising team this year, so we get to offer it for free. From Jon Bailey to Raeanne – we've had such wonderful support this year. It's the instructors that grew it and planned it, spending so much time taking control of the organization, and Manuel coming over on board really made the event as great as it could be.

Jose: As the co-chairpersons, the scope given to Andrea and me this year was to increase student engagement. So, this year we have 37 instructors and 54 students that are managing everything: the webpage, the algorithm, communicating with the guests - there are just many things led by students. Every team has a minimum of 5 students making sure they have the resources they need. So, I must really credit the student body for the development this year.

What are some of the highlights that we can expect on November 3rd?

Jose: The greatest highlight this year is that it's back in-person! The first step for students is to make sure they're prepared for in-person interactions. We've collaborated with career services to help students do pitches, reduce a little bit of the stress going in, and to equip them with the skills to approach and talk to people.



Do you have any tips for students?

Raeanne: My tips to the students: Be brave. Have a game plan, prepare, and have some questions in mind. Do some research on the professionals coming in. Get out of your comfort zone and push yourself to explore the options you have once you graduate.

Andrea: My advice to the students is to remember that these employers are there because they want to talk to you, even if it feels scary. There should be no fear factor like “do they even want to talk to me?” Yes, they do. That is why they are there. Step outside your comfort zone, build your LinkedIn profile and get in touch with them after the conference. Students feel like there is a barrier between them and instructors and industry, but we need to push through that barrier. Every professional you will talk to was once in your shoes.

What would you say to a student who isn't sure they want to attend the conference?

Jose: Students should understand that 80% of the jobs that exist online are already taken. Only 20% of those jobs are still available so networking becomes one of the biggest strategies for you to be where you want to be in your career. So, you really need to step up. Instead of you reaching out to 100 people, those people are coming to you. It's saving your money, saving your time. The industry professionals you will meet November 3rd are called boosters – they are there to promote. The booster might be the person that ends up connecting you to your future employer. This is hands down the best opportunity to put yourself out there and you cannot let it go.

Andrea: Also, free lunch!

Raeanne: Honestly, it's a fun day. Students are sometimes hesitant to go but the event is really a different pace. You get to see your instructors outside the class environment, you get to see them in a different light. You get to dress up like a professional, so you feel like you're going somewhere big and fancy. It's just kind of neat to experience.

Andrea: There's a DJ, there's lights, it's fun! I've been going for 14 years, and the excitement is always there. When we had the conference online, I told myself I would never do this conference again. It just didn't carry the excitement that it has in-person. Raeanne hits the head on that, it's just so much fun. You get the feeling that it's serious but it's not. Everyone is mixing and mingling and it's a relaxed atmosphere.

Raeanne: It's an inspiring event, you leave the event feeling truly inspired. Hearing the stories of these professionals is really inspiring and motivating.

Jose: Especially to BIT students I'd say that they are the ones who have crafted the website for the conference and created the algorithm that helps us respond to questionnaires and allot the guests to tables. Their work is the highlight you don't want to miss!



Closing The STEM Gap: How Networking Can Help Women Thrive in Tech

Underrepresented groups need a visual portrayal of what their future can look like in a field of work before they dive into it. They want to know if they will be secure in a field that doesn't see many individuals who share their identity. For more women to start taking steps towards a career in STEM, they need to see what their future can look like in the field. However, in a male dominated field, it is difficult to hear stories that women can relate to and derive inspiration from. The answer lies in building strong networks with other women who are thriving in the field and hearing their stories.

Growing with Mentorship

Brian Uzzi, who conducted a study on the difference between the networking habits of men and women says, "When you talk to women about their job interviews and the things that concern them, it's about how the culture of the firm is oriented towards women. That type of information is most helpful if it comes from another woman." Statistics show that 77% of women who are high achievers in the field, had strong ties with 3 or more women in their innermost circle.

It's important for minority groups to have visible role models and access to mentors who can provide real insight into their day-to-day STEM careers. And attending networking events will provide the desired form of visual portrayal like no other form of building connections.

Forming Alliances

While women-only events are great for building interpersonal connections, they don't give a realistic picture of the demographics of the sector. An open-to-all networking event helps provide a realistic image of representation in the industry and alleviates previously established perceptions for the dominators and minorities both. Minorities need better allies to climb up the ladder in the field, and if they don't show up to networking events, they will miss out on opportunities to learn and grow from well-established professionals in the field. It's true that going to these events may be daunting. The feeling of being outnumbered can cause a lot of anxiety. But depending on the city, the numbers may not be as bad as it seems from the outside. Seeing minorities at events will help the groups dominating the field gain understand what the future of the sector looks like, and encourage them to create support and space needed to work towards building a more inclusive and comfortable environment in tech.



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