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Perfecting Connecting™: A Personal Guide to Mastering Networking in the Workplace

Perfecting Connecting™: Learning to Speak the Language of Others



Quick Card to Perfecting Connecting™

## Book Sarah!

*Welcome to this month's edition of my e-column focusing on Perfecting Connecting®. Each month I hope to inspire, motivate and encourage you to strengthen the connections in your life. My message includes strategies, inspirational stories, recommended reading and action steps for you to take that will help you begin your journey to perfecting your connecting. If you find this article helpful, please forward it to those in your network.*

## April 2005 eZine Sarah Michel

### Think Serendipity!

Boarding the plane at 6:30 p.m., exhausted after standing for eight hours delivering a training session to government managers in Washington D.C., I was looking forward to a peaceful flight. One of the few benefits for those of us who have to fly to work is that every once in while we get bumped to first class. Today was one of those lucky days.

As I was getting ready to put on my headset and lose myself in one of the many movie options available on my private little TV, I noticed for the first time that someone was actually sitting next to me. Now, you need to know that I have become really good at willing people to "keep moving" toward the back of the plane when a large herd begins to board. Roughly 75 percent of the time I flew in the past two years, the middle seat next to me was vacant, allowing me to spread out, sleep, work on my laptop and generally isolate myself.

You might think this is a strange thing to hear coming from an extroverted networker, but I have fallen into the victim mentality when it comes to flying. Since it has become such a nightmare and inconvenience to fly, many of us out of fear and frustration have shut down, ignored fellow passengers and generally just learned to tolerate and endure flying as a necessary evil. I too had become one of those people.

Then a little voice within me said, "Take off your headphones and greet your fellow passenger." To my pleasant surprise, I discovered that my seat mate worked for 3M, one of my favorite examples of companies that encourage and foster creativity and innovation in the workplace. For the next three hours we engaged in wonderful and fascinating dialog. I learned firsthand how the famous "Post-It" note was developed and how 3M encourages all of their employees to spend 15 percent of their time doing something innovative each week.

When the plane landed, we exchanged business cards. I have been able to connect many people from my network, as well as several clients, to this brilliant man and the great work that 3M does. As I reflected on this chance encounter, it dawned on me that I had probably missed out on meeting many fascinating people by isolating myself on the dozen planes I sit on every month.

Tim Sanders, author of *Love is the Killer App, How to Win Business and Influence Friends* (Three Rivers Press, 2002), which I highly recommend, says that in the 21st century, our entire success will be based on the people we know. Your network is your web of relationships. Everyone in your address book or Rolodex is a potential partner for each person we connect with. Everyone we meet can fit somewhere in our ever-expanding business universe. Our job is to meet them and then figure out where they fit and make the connection.

We must open ourselves up to the exciting opportunities to expand our network through the people we meet on planes, trains, while standing in line, sitting in waiting rooms and numerous other public and social situations. We must think serendipity and enjoy meeting people just for the fun of it!

Unfortunately, in today's world, I think we have forgotten how to do that and we're all missing out. My good friend Scott Friedman, President of the National Speakers Association, spends more time on planes than people who work in the airline industry. His presidential theme this year is "Enjoy the Journey." Are you enjoying the journey or just enduring it?

Perfecting Connecting® Action Steps:

1. You must live in the present and look for the richness in everyone you meet.
2. Think serendipity and enjoy meeting people just for

the fun of it.

3. Being a detective pays off. Become a curious observer of people.
4. You must rediscover active listening skills. Listen to understand and stop “reloading” when people are talking to you.
5. You must believe in the miracle of coincidence. It’s just God’s way of remaining anonymous.

Rediscover the pure joy of meeting someone when you least expect it. Think serendipity and start enjoying the journey!



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