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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 readings and action steps for you to take that will help you begin your journey towards perfecting your connecting. If you find this article helpful, please forward it to your network.

August 2005 eZine Sarah Michel

Family Connection

August seems to be the month for annual treks to see family, rediscover roots and take vacations. If you've tried to do business this month, then I'm sure you discovered clients and colleagues who were "on vacation/visiting family back home."

My entire life during the first week of August, my family has traveled from all corners of the country to meet in Grand Bend, Ontario, Canada at our old family cottage on Lake Huron. My grandparents bought the cottage when my father was 15, and he is now 82! I was raised there and now my children are growing up with this annual ritual as part of their life every August.

Rituals and traditions are important for family connection. They become a touchstone when life becomes a little too nuts. Our cottage does not have cable TV or Internet access, and up until last year, it didn't even have a phone. The reality of needing to be able to access 911 now that we had 16 kids ranging in age between 2 and 17 years finally hit us. My brother Scott protested and begged us not to do it because he was sure that the world of modern technology would soon rush in following the phone installation. He feared our family rituals of charades, Monopoly, card games, book reading, children playing, long talks and walks on the beach would disappear once we let high-tech in the door.

I'm happy to report that hasn't happened. The kids still play Monopoly and build elaborate sand castles on the beach while the grown-ups sit around talking, laughing and reconnecting. We share and discuss books we're reading, politics and current affairs. We also talk about my mother and brother who have passed away in the last decade and how they both loved the cottage. Somehow, we all feel their presence and spirit the most when we are all there together, celebrating our annual summer family ritual.

When I was growing up we didn't have any of the distractions that my kids have now like the Internet, text messaging, e-mail or cable TV. I also didn't have to grow up with the word "terrorism" or watch my best friend's father be sent to a place called Iraq. Yet, as I watched my children play with their 14 cousins, they were doing the exact same activities I did more than 35 years ago. The cottage and our annual family reunion is a touchstone for them as much as it is for me. Once a year they get the same chance I do to get off the merry-go-round of life and reconnect with their family. What rituals do you have with your family that gives you the opportunity to reconnect?

My friend and fellow speaker, Mary Loverde wrote a wonderful book that I highly recommend, *"Stop Screaming at the Microwave, How to Connect Your Disconnected Life."* In it she talks about the need for family rituals as an important part of feeling connected. A ritual may be as simple as having breakfast together once a week, going to church together, taking an annual trip or working at a soup kitchen on Thanksgiving. In the fast-paced lives we all lead now it can be hard to get everyone in your family even in the same room. Why not start a ritual where once a week at a designated time everyone text messages, IMs or conference calls in to share one great thing that has happened during the week? Call it "family huddle time" and only huddle for 10 minutes. I don't think the actual activity matters; it's the ritual that will make the impact. Recently, I overheard my 12-year-old daughter talking about "our family tradition." She was describing how we frequently have a nice breakfast (often in bed) on Sunday mornings together. I had no idea she thought of it that way or that it was so important to her.

How can we expect to be effective at connecting with our clients, customers or colleagues if we are disconnected in our personal life? Remember, Perfecting Connecting® starts at home.

Perfecting Connecting® Action Steps:

1. **Solicit family ritual ideas** (have an idea box in your kitchen) to come up with new and creative ways to connect at home.
2. **If you travel a lot for work, look for ways to stay connected** and opportunities to start traditions like sending postcards, calling at a certain time every night or bringing back the same souvenir. Once a year, I take each of my daughters on a trip to an interesting place where I'm speaking. We stay for a few extra days to connect and simply enjoy each other.
3. **Let modern technology help you stay connected with your family members** by using your cell phone to call them during nonproductive times, such as long commutes, waiting in airports or in between appointments. My husband has this tradition with his family and stays connected by playing the game, "Where in the World is Fred Calling From?" every time he calls his siblings or parents.

Comments or Questions?

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