

Is Your Net Working?

By Sarah Michel © 2005

What's your social capital? If you've been through job interviews recently, or have been considered for a promotion, I'll bet you've been asked about "your social capital." Employers want to know what and how much social capital you have to improve their connections, word-of-mouth advertising, potential partnerships, resources and alliances.

People are interested in your *net worth*, so to speak and they want to know how much you have invested in your network relationships that will in turn produce big dividends for their company. In other words... how big is your *net* and is it *working*?

I recently re-read "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference" by Malcolm Gladwell. I consider this book to be the No. 1 "must-read" for this decade. First released in 2000, I was aware of Gladwell's research for the book from reading an article he wrote for *New Yorker* magazine in 1996 in which he first wrote about connectors. I was spellbound as I read this article that completely captured the message I was so eager to spread to the world; the power of word-of-mouth referrals combined with a connector who has a strong and diverse network, can *tip* any idea, product or person into an overnight success!

We all know at least one "connector," or as Gladwell likes to call them, *mavens*. Maven is a Yiddish word that means one who accumulates knowledge. According to Gladwell, mavens are information brokers who share and trade what they know and mentor others on how to expand their world.

My friend Meg is a maven and one of the most connected people I know. She is a natural "matchmaker" who is responsible, thus far, for arranging six marriages and hundreds of partnerships, jobs and alliances. I'm convinced if you want to meet anyone in this world, Meg can connect you. She is probably only one or two degrees removed from the person or information that you are seeking and is always happy and eager to help **anyone** who asks.

Mark Granovetter proved in his landmark 1974 study, which resulted in the book "Getting a Job," that *weak ties* (acquaintances that you see

occasionally or rarely) are more important and valuable to you than strong ties (close friends, colleagues and clients you see often). His idea is that your close friends occupy the same world that you do, so how much more would they know that you don't already know? On the other hand, your acquaintances or weak ties live in a totally different world and most likely have information and resources that you don't possess. This is how you can improve your social capital and net worth by experiencing the power and strength of weak ties. It will most likely lead you to your next big career opportunity as well.

Having lots of different acquaintances (weak ties) will open up worlds to you that are filled with interesting people, jobs and ideas just waiting to connect with you. Living your life this way will also increase the odds that you might just bump into a maven... trust me, your life will never be the same again.

Perfecting Connecting® Action Steps:

- Discover the “mavens” in your network, or in my book I refer to them as “shakers.” They know people and information you don't and they like to help. If you're not sure who they are, try completing the exercise attached which I adapted from reading “The Tipping Point.”
- Accept invitations to attend parties, functions and meetings that are outside your world. Expand your sphere of influence.
- Adopt an attitude that you are only one meeting or interview away from your next dream job. Think serendipity and enjoy meeting new people just for the pure fun of it!

Start building a bigger and stronger **net**, so when you cast it out into the waters of your network, it will collect numerous opportunities for you.