

# **STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES**



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## **How to Keep Your Professional Networks Warm: Good Structure Trumps Good Intentions.**

There is a cliché in banking:

The best time to ask for a loan is when you do not need one. And the worst time to ask for a loan is when you do.

The same concept applies to managing relationships important for your career: The worst time to tap into your network is when you need a favor. The best time to approach your network is when you do not.

## **The Importance of Keeping Your Network Warm**

Given the time demands of work and family, it is too easy to allow professional networks to get cold. The result is that when you **MUST** access your network, you will be worried that others will think: “The only time she contacts me is when she is needy.”

Keeping your network warm means deliberately structuring times during the year when you place a telephone call to people for reasons that have nothing to do with you. Make it about them.

### **Triggers for Placing Calls**

The “Pick up the Phone” Season begins 15 November, when you can start wishing your contacts “Happy Thanksgiving.” It ends midnight 15 January when it is inappropriate to wish people “Happy New Year.”

In other words, you have a window of sixty days to reach out and say hello for reasons that have nothing to do with you.

Do not your waste time or money on a card. Cards are expensive and do not provoke conversation. It’s the conversation you are after:

“Hi Lauren, it’s Liam. Just wanted to call and wish you and your family a wonderful Christmas. Let’s catch up on life. Call me when you get a chance. My phone number is 894-662-0378.”

### **Birthdays**

On Facebook, click “Events” and then click “Birthdays.” It will show you the birthdays of all the people on your Facebook network. You can key in names and dates on your mobile device calendar to remind yourself to pick up your mobile device wish happy birthday.

On LinkedIn, click “Messages” and scroll down until you get to “Birthdays.” LinkedIn will tell you who had a birthday yesterday and who has one today. Write the names down on your mobile device calendar.

After you have made the call, copy and paste the note to the same time next year.

Avoid checking “Congratulations” on social media. Your goal is a conversation.

“Hi Liam, it’s Fred. I wanted to leave a voice mail message to wish you a happy birthday. Why don’t we catch up on life. Call me when you get a chance. 894-662-0378.”

### **Dates of Employment**

If you are heading a team, how can you keep the network warm within a corporate hierarchy without offending direct supervisors? Ask the HR Department to provide you with start-dates of employment for those who report to you and one level below those who report to you.

Put dates of employment for each team member on your mobile device calendar. Leave a voice mail message on the anniversary date for each employee:

“Ralph, this is Sandy. Today is your third-year anniversary with our company. I wanted to call to wish you Happy Anniversary and to tell you how much I value the work you are doing for our customers and the team.”

### **Motivation is Overrated.**

In the short term, some people are takers and not givers. In the long term, most people who freely give value to others tend to receive value.

The focus of this article is to take initiative to make contact when you do not have to do so.

A second focus is do not wait for yourself to get motivated. Motivation comes and goes. But structuring your mobile device calendar provides assurance that you will be consistent over the months ahead.

Keeping your network warm is not a “nice” idea. It is a business imperative for career management during uncertain times.

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