3 Easy Steps to Become a Procurement Networking Guru
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3 EASY STEPS TO BECOME A PROCUREMENT NETWORKING GURU

Take these three easy steps to become a procurement networking guru and realise the benefits of networking in a global community.

The benefits of networking are many. However, many people still struggle with the concept and the motivation to get going.

At Procurious, we want to create one huge, global network of procurement professionals, all of whom have the opportunity to learn from one another. We want everyone to realise the benefits of networking, so I thought I would share my three easy steps to becoming a networking guru to help everyone get started.

1. Network from the heart

Why from the heart? Because networking has to be authentic, and you need to have the other person’s interest as your priority.

Firstly, your networking has to be based on absolute authenticity – that is, a real friendship or genuine interest in what someone else is doing.

As a networking guru, if you want to form a relationship with another person, you first need to show them how they’ll benefit. If you focus on how you can help others, more than how they can help you, you’ll always be approaching people with the best motivation.

A study from the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that workers who help others feel happier about their work than those who decide not to help. By asking someone for help, you give them the opportunity to display their skills and knowledge, and, at the same time, give their self-esteem a boost.

If the person asking the question wins, and the person answering the question wins, what’s stopping us from asking more questions. Despite all these benefits, perhaps the fear of reaching out to someone and being rejected, is greater than the potential benefit.
When we face the fear of reaching out to someone else, we need to remember that networking is very much a two way street. Whether you’re at a face-to-face event, or on a social media platform, everyone is there for the same purpose - to network. So don’t be too self-conscious!

2. Be both social and formal

In the 'old world' getting to know someone and understand whether you had anything in common took a long time. You would meet someone at an event, follow-up via email and then organise a series of catch-ups to get to know them. You might have had to meet them quite a few times before you discovered the cross-over points.

In the world of social networking, the 'getting to know you' process is accelerated because you can see all this information on their profile. This fast-tracks the expansion of your network, because you can pre-qualify those people who you would like to join your network based on their experience.

Effective networking really involves a commitment of time, energy, and resources to produce meaningful results. Also remember that face-to-face meetings still play an important role in expanding your network.

You must also care for the network you’ve established (or are establishing). This includes personal contact through e-mails, telephone calls, scheduled meetings, or even a business lunch.

It’s only when we get to really know people through face-to-face contact, that we can understand both their motivations and their aspirations. You can then work out how you and other members of your network can help them achieve their goals. That’s when the magic starts to happen.

When you’re thinking about face-to-face networking, don't just think formal meetings, corporate cocktail parties and conferences. A networking guru knows that you can literally network around the clock!
Just because you are “off duty”, doesn’t mean that you aren’t networking. Every interface you have is an opportunity to connect with interesting people who you can help, just as they can help you.

I once won a $1M contract from a wonderful woman I met at my son’s kindergarten parents’ evening. A few weeks back, I was at an Indian Ayurvedic Medicine discussion, and met a senior Facebook executive who has agreed to speak at one of our major events.

You always need to keep your mind and attitude open to these opportunities.

And once you have an established network, keep it active by using social media. The benefit to having an online network is that you can better maintain your network by keeping in touch much more easily. By posting updates and information on your social media profiles, you are reminding people that you are still out there. Your posts also act as a prompt for them to reach out to you and connect. Or, even better, remind them to recommend you for a job!

**3. Connect the dots**

Once you have an established network, you need to understand the power of connecting the dots.

As Steve Jobs said, “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.”

Many people equate having a good network with having a large database of contacts, or attending high-profile professional conferences and events. But they falter at the next step - actually doing something to make the connection real.

In other words, to create commercial advantage from your network, there’s no point in just being 'connected' with all these amazing people. You need to know what to do with the relationship.
Your network will live and thrive only when it is used. A good way to begin is to make a simple request, or take the initiative to connect two people who would benefit from meeting each other. Doing something, anything, gets the ball rolling and builds confidence that you do, in fact, have something to contribute.

Other actions to cement your network can include sending through articles or other things that might be relevant or of interest to a contact. Or, drill down even further and remember birthdays, acknowledge important achievements, or determine a contact’s favourite hobby or sports team, and use this information to build the relationship. The fact that you’re thinking about a new contact can, and will, pay huge dividends.

Unfortunately many people don’t reach out to their network until they need something badly. A networking guru does exactly the opposite. They take every opportunity to give to, and receive from, the network, whether they need help or not.

For these reasons, and many more, I believe in the power of networking – for yourself, your contacts and the profession.

Apparently there are more than 2.5M procurement professionals in the world. But there are probably less than 500,000 who we can readily identify.

Many procurement professionals are working in isolation, unaware that there is a whole universe of knowledge and professionals available to help them do their jobs better, and learn more effectively.

There are so many problems we can solve together if we use the power of connection and leverage our network. If each and every procurement professional becomes a networking guru, there is very little that we can’t achieve!