



BY RUSS JONES

The Reward of Staying in Touch – Friendships

In my work, much of my time is spent with individuals who are not working and are seeking new career opportunities. Nearly all of them wish that they had paid more attention to their careers, family and friends while they had been working instead of hyper focusing on their jobs. As a result, they often make a personal pact to “do things differently” when they land a new position.

Whether you are currently in the job market or contemplating a job change in the near future, some of the steps individuals plan to take after joining a new employer can be valuable planning tips:

- Stay in touch with the contacts you made during your job search. Send thank you cards and include your new business card. Invite them to stay in touch with you.
- Make new contacts and have a plan for staying in touch with them. Carve out time in your schedule each week to just stay in touch. Put reminders in your smart phone or e-mail to make sure that you are staying the course.
- Join and participate in associations and networking groups and attend trade conferences. Don't just belong, make an effort to attend.
- Spend less time at work and take more time to be with family and friends.
- Don't be so serious about your work.
- “Give back” by helping job seekers. Remember how thankful you were during your own search when individuals took the time to offer encouragement, advice and assistance.
- Manage employees more effectively and compassionately
- Develop hobbies, new career interests or become a volunteer in an organization where you are passionate about a cause.



As an observer of the employment scene for more than 25 years, I find it unfortunate that most job seekers when employed don't keep their vows. Once individuals land a new position, most return to their old habits –concentrating on the demands of the new position, neglecting their personal lives, not taking vacations and perhaps most disheartening, not continuing to network or help other job seekers.

It has often been said and during the '80s a bumper sticker proclaimed, “Whoever dies with the most toys wins.” My personal belief is that friendships are what are most important, so the phrase should be changed to, “Whoever dies with the most friends wins”. In our electronic age, the word “friend” has taken on a new and inaccurate meaning. Whereas social networking defines “friend” as someone who “friends” you on Facebook, or is a connection on LinkedIn, Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary defines friend as “someone you know well and are fond of, intimate associate, close acquaintance, a supporter, sympathizer”.

True friendship requires nurturing. Devoting a small portion of your time each week to staying in touch with people you care about can pay rich dividends in your life. Seek no gain from these interactions except to maintain friendships. Ultimately, these acts of kindness will reap infinite personal and professional rewards. Take time today to call a friend and ask, “How are you? I was thinking of you and thought I'd call.” You'll be surprised by how warmly your call is received and how good your gesture makes you feel.

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