

TENG Newsletter, Vol. 6 No 1

## A Better Approach for a New Year

Last year I wrote the newsletter, “Trust Based Relationships” (TENG Newsletter, Vol. 5 No 2) concerning member protocol within our Discussion Group. If you belong to a Yahoo Group that shares information on such hobbies as raising begonias, restoring antique furniture or sharing recipes, it may be acceptable protocol to post a quick unsigned message or one signed with only your first name. While you may be asking for worthwhile information, in all likelihood it does not possess the strategic and personal value of the information shared in our Discussion Group making such casual posts normal behavior.

On the other hand, asking members whom you haven’t met to introduce you to trusted executive-level contacts at potential employers or share a process template they may have spent hours creating, without previously revealing your identity and experience, is inconsiderate at best. You are expecting them to blindly trust you. The typical member request goes something like this, “Do you have any contacts at Citicorp or Blockbuster?” Why should anyone introduce their valued contacts built over many years to a total stranger?

You may wish to restart your search in the New Year with one of these approaches when you post your next request to the Discussion Group: “This is my background. Whom do you know than could use my services? Would you be willing to have a discussion with me, either over the phone or in person? Here is my contact information.” Your request should not be lengthy, but should offer enough information to arouse reader interest.

Another method might look something like this. Instead of asking, “Whom do you know at GE and Pepsico?” you may wish to try an approach like this: “Whom do you know that needs someone who can integrate the systems of newly-acquired companies into the parent company, or standardize global applications methods, or remediate a deteriorating outsource relationship, or some other comparable question?” This forces you to look within yourself to know how you add value and causes you to market yourself using your value statement. Such a question is more apt to provoke reactions from members that may offer fresh ideas as well as names.

In both cases, people who reply to requests like these are more likely to be genuinely interested in speaking with you, rather than not replying at all, or wasting their time and yours by sharing names of little or no value to your search.

TENG has grown to a network of over 3,300 members, each with her or his own Rolodex and a wealth of experience. Very few of us will ignore a genuine request for assistance from a fellow member, but a request for valuable confidential information will be better met, if you approach potential sources of contacts and information with a sense of respect

for them and a desire to begin a trusting relationship. You have to offer value in order to receive it.

Happy New Year and Networking!  
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