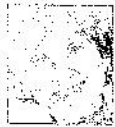


Try making a 're-connection'

This is the time of year to make the most of your business sources, without pressure



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It may seem as though the holiday season at work is all about online shopping when the boss is away and facing down piles of frosted cookies arrayed at three-foot intervals.

In fact, it is more than that. This is the perfect time to reconnect with those who have been helpful to you in the past — and who may be so again in the future, says Lindsey Pollak, a career writer and speaker in Manhattan. And though many people know the value of reconnecting, few actually do anything about it.

The holidays provide "carte blanche to get in touch with anyone," Pollak says, even if "you haven't spoken in 100 years."

This certainly is easiest to do if you have no immediate request for help. You can send a card or e-mail offering thanks for help given in the past and reporting what you're up to now, offering wishes for a happy holiday season and saying you would love to stay in touch — say, coffee or drinks after the first of the year when the pressures of the season are over.

And if you think it's appropriate, consider issuing an invitation to holiday events you think they might enjoy.

Don't forget that this window of opportunity extends into the New Year. Duffy Spencer, a business communications coach and corporate trainer in Westbury, sends out Happy New Year fliers the first week of January — when they won't be competing with December's incoming flood of party invitations, Christmas cards and holiday catalogs.

Of course, reconnecting is much trickier if you want to ask for help from someone with whom you've lost touch. It's tempting to pretend you're calling to offer wishes for a happy holiday — and then sneak in the request for a job lead or reference. But people can see through the charade, says Lucy Rosen, president of the Business Development Group, a marketing and public relations firm in Garden City.

She says people generally



NEWSDAY PHOTO / KAREY WILES STAFF

Duffy Spencer with the flier she created for professionals, clients, students and friends.

resent setting up a how-are-you-doin' meeting only to have you "show up with an empty pad and pen asking, 'Who can you tell me to call?'" It's better to bite the bullet and be up front about what you need.

Spencer suggests opting for the "open agenda" approach: Start by saying you're sorry you have not done a better job of staying in touch — a move that, she says, "asserts your right to make mistakes" — then explain that you're calling now to ask if a reference might be possible. Of course, you should indicate that you hope to reconnect and offer support in the future. And wrap up the conversation with a wish for a happy holiday.

Pollak says that if you want to reconnect with several people, start with the nicest one first, a move that will "set yourself up for success." If a long time has elapsed and your initial relationship was not a close one, she says sending a request in an e-mail would be a better choice.

And because this is the season for giving, it's wise to take stock of how giving you've been — not only to those with whom you're looking to reconnect, but to others as well. Could it be that you are what Rosen calls "a taker" — always in asking mode? If that's the case, boy, do we have a New Year's resolution for you.

It may be time to reflect on how much help / support you've received this year and compare it to how much you've given. Then, be on the lookout for resources you can share with others. "Listen well, think about where the match could be," Spencer says.

You can avoid the anxiety of having to reconnect and ask for help, she says, if you "always understand the nature of reciprocity."

Giving genuine thanks in the work world

- "Keep your network close," says Lucy Rosen, president of the Business Development Group, a marketing and public relations firm in Garden City. You don't want professional contacts to feel valued only when you need them — but to "feel valued even when you don't need them."
- Yes, it can be a challenge to pick up the phone or send a note on a regular basis. But Duffy Spencer, a business communications coach in Westbury, reminds us of the important thinking in Stephen Covey's longtime bestseller, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People": We make a big mistake in focusing only on what's urgent to the detriment of what's important.

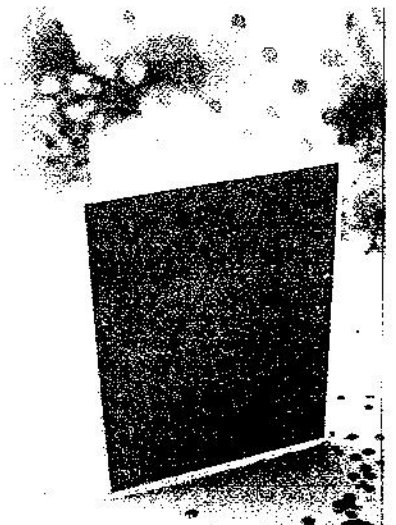
With that in mind, consider the following.

- If you're new to the work world and never really thanked those who

helped you get your first job, this is a perfect time to do so. Send a holiday greeting and personal note to people such as your coach in the college career center, friends of your parents who set you up with interviews, a professor who gave great guidance, says Leslie Malin, a life coach in Woodstock, N.Y., who also operates the greeting card Web site winterwonderlandcards.com.

■ If you received great training or support on an earlier job, send a greeting to your former supervisor, suggests Malin — something like, "At the time I didn't realize how much you influenced me. But now that I'm a manager, I find myself patterning myself after you. I never thanked you properly and I want to do so now."

■ Steer clear of cards or e-greetings that carry religious messages or those that could be construed as offensive.



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