



I SCRATCH YOUR BACK – WHY WON'T YOU SCRATCH MINE?

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I received the following email today: “My LinkedIn account has grown tremendously with many high quality contacts. My challenge seems to be to convert all these people to mutually beneficial relationships. Folks always enjoy the referrals I make, but seem slow to reciprocate. Do you have suggestions?”

This brings up a key point that many people struggle with -- how to build relationships with newly acquired contacts.

I used to try to identify who were the right people for me to invest time/energy in to build my relationships. I found this strategy to be very difficult. I also wanted to identify the influential people so that I could focus on them. The problem with this tactic was I found out many of these influential people were very self-centered. In addition, there were a few people who I hadn't considered to be influential initially who turned out to be quite the opposite.

So I flipped the paradigm. Instead of me trying to identify the right people, I now let them qualify themselves.

Relationships take time. I find being willing to give before receiving is a great approach – provided if it's done with the right mindset. Giving with the expectation of receiving is not truly giving. It is barter. I'm not saying barter is bad, or that it doesn't work. But it is not “giver's gain.”

To fully embrace this approach, you must look at aggregate results, rather than focus on each individual. I will do what I can to provide value to people in my network. The value may come in the form of information, resources, connections or referrals. Whether a particular individual reciprocates or not, is not relevant to me.

I have received plenty of unexpected and great referrals from very unlikely sources. The way I choose to view these bonuses is -- as my "reward" for having helped others. This way I stay focused on the givers gain mindset versus slipping into the "I scratch your back – why won't you scratch mine" syndrome.