

6 Steps to Connecting With Influential People (Part 1)

By Gwen Moran as contributed to Entrepreneur Magazine

Influencers -- those well-connected, knowledgeable voices to which others listen and respond -- are coveted connections. They can provide insight, recommendations, introductions and opportunities.

Most people already know who the influencers are in their industries, says attorney and entrepreneur Steven Babitsky, co-author of *The Street Smart MBA: 10 Proven Strategies for Driving Business Success* (Apress, 2012). They're often popular authors, speakers, bloggers, columnists or successful businesspeople. Babitsky has an effective formula for connecting with many of them. Here are his six steps to connecting with influencers in your industry.

1. Offer something.

"Give three things and ask for one," Babitsky says. In other words: Give more than you take. When he's interested in making contact with an influencer, Babitsky first determines what he can offer that will be of value to the contact. He may be writing a white paper or book or be organizing a conference where he can offer the individual a speaking gig.

Of course, not everyone is writing books or organizing conferences every day. However, you can offer to interview the person for your blog or for a special report on your web site. Alternatively, you might be involved with a professional or trade organization where you can introduce the individual to your own network of influencers.

2. Do your homework.

It's usually possible to research influencers' past writing and speeches, interests, and pet causes with a simple online search. Don't waste their time asking basic questions or for information that is easily available online. Instead, find common points and use those to find areas where you might connect.

3. Get in touch.

Babitsky likes to reach out via phone or email instead of social media because it's more personal, he says. However, take your lead from the influencer's cues. If he or she is active on Twitter or carries on online conversations on his or her blog, that might be a good way to get in touch, too.

4. Limit the ask.

When reaching out for the first time, make it short and sweet. Don't ask for anything that will take more than 10 or 15 minutes -- a brief interview or a straightforward question or two. People generally like to help, but they may not have time to answer lengthy questionnaires or get involved in a seemingly endless back-and-forth.

5. Keep in touch.

Maintain a database of contacts that also includes searchable keywords related to interests. That way, if you come across an article or information related to some of your contacts' interests, you can easily send it along, keeping you relevant and memorable.

6. Ask to reciprocate.

If someone has helped you, Babitsky recommends asking the individual if there is anything you might do to help him or her. The individual may be dealing with a challenge you can help alleviate, he says. If not, the ask is another form of relationship building, showing the influencer that you're interested in giving back.

Next up on our eNewsletter, Part 2—Connecting with Online Influencers

Information provided for you by ~

Marilyn K. Dayton, Business/Marketing Specialist

<http://www.marketingandbizpro.com> ~ marilyn@marketingandbizpro.com

860-389-2521

