



The Laso Corporation
Bringing People Together

Laso eLetter

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Dear Laurie,

NETworking or NOTworking? That is the question!

During my first experience with a down cycle in the early 2000s, I was too naïve and carefree to realize the impact of doing less business. I did not have kids, a mortgage and "real" responsibilities. After the dotcom bust and 9/11, the IT search business was in a serious slump. I had just had my second child, so I focused on her and my two-year-old son and waited for the tide to turn.



From a business perspective, this did not serve me well. With all the changes in information technology and recruiting, I "should" have stayed more focused on keeping ahead of the curve and preparing for the upswing. (Of course, I had a lot of fun with my kids and wouldn't do much differently even with the wisdom of hindsight.)

But when the economy began to falter in 2008, I resolved to use my time differently. I had continued to support IBM and they had always provided a real barometer for the market. When their recruiting started to be placed on hold in August 2008, I knew the situation was serious. I tightened the Laso belt and prepared to ride out the storm that everyone was predicting.

I decided I would invest the downtime in marketing Laso, so my company would be in a stronger position when the market began to turn.

I volunteered more both at my kids' school and for the City of Wheaton (you never know who you might meet). I joined an executive leadership group. I volunteered for a new group formed by HRMAC. I agreed to lead a community relations effort for my local chamber of commerce. I networked regularly at meetings for a manufacturing association. I joined LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. I produced a YouTube video. I rarely said no to a network lunch or seminar. I created an event for folks to come together to discuss how technology can help improve sales.

Was I NETworking or NOTworking? Did all my time out of the office and away from the phone bring strategic new contacts? Do more people know about Laso than did before? I would say, yes, more people know about Laso, but does that mean all my networking was a smart way to spend my time?

In retrospect, what I needed before I started networking was a strategic plan - a way to know whether or not, at

In This Issue

[A Message from Laurie](#)

[Six suggestions for using Social Media - Article](#)

[Tech Corner: Can you speak NetWord?](#)

[About Laso](#)

[NETwork or NOTwork?](#)

[The History of...LinkedIn](#)

[Build Your Network One Meal a Time - A Book Review](#)

NETwork or NOTwork?

Increasingly, a better question is, do you NETwork or NOTwork? Blunt? Yes. In tune with today's realities? Yes, especially in a highly competitive environment where relationships built on trust are more than an edge, they're the bottom line. People prefer to give business to people they know.

Here's a look at what networking is (and is not), some benefits of networking, and a few tips on how to network effectively.

Networking is not handing out business cards to as many people as possible. It's much more than simply making the obligatory rounds at a business reception. It goes far beyond setting up a social media profile.

Real networking is a consistent, long-term effort to develop and nurture mutually beneficial relationships with other people. Such intentional networking is far more satisfying than a hit or miss effort to build a list of superficial contacts.

Networking done well can raise your profile, expand opportunities, bring qualified new leads, and grow your business. But networking can also bring substantial benefits beyond increased referrals and sales:

any particular time, I should be spending time at a lunch meeting or in the office making calls. I needed to know how and when networking was working, or NOTworking.

Do you have some of these same questions on your mind? In this Laso eLetter, we talk about:

- Having a plan so you NETWORK productively
- Tips on using social media wisely
- A wonderful book review by Vickie Austin of *Never Eat Alone* by Ken Ferrazzi
- A brief history of LinkedIn
- The latest communications lingo: test your knowledge and possibly win a prize by taking Laso's ACRONYM QUIZ WITH PRIZES

Though I would change some of the ways I spent time networking from a work perspective, I have no regrets from a personal standpoint. Whether we will ever do business together or not, the people I have met through networking have brightened my life during a gloomy time in business. My new and deeper connections have kept me positive and moving forward. I continue to NETWORK, though far less and in a more focused manner, keeping NETWORKing balanced so there is less time spent out of the office NOTworking.

Here's to continued success,
Laurie

Six Suggestions for using Social Media

Ready to include social media in your networking strategy for 2010? Already using it but wondering if you're on the right track? Here are six tips for HR and IT professionals planning to wade into the social media waters or for those who have already jumped in:

1. **Embrace social media as here to stay.** Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and their many counterparts have long since moved from novelty to mainstream. Professionals everywhere depend on social media for information and interaction. If you've been waiting for the perfect moment to start using social media, it's here!
2. At the same time, **realize what social media can't do.** It's not a cure-all for every problem. It's no substitute for a strong overall marketing strategy. It can't replace excellent customer service. "If you're not willing to go the extra mile for your customer, then all the social media in the world won't bring loyalty," says Marsha Collier, an online specialist commenting for *Fast Company* blogger Craig Pelkey-Landes.
3. **Develop a social media plan.** Set long-term, measurable goals and evaluate your progress frequently. Research trends in your sector, identify your primary audience, and choose social media platforms most likely to reach that audience. Take the time to build a complete profile that complements your brand image and keep that profile as consistent as possible across every site you join.
4. Remember that **social media is as much about listening as talking.** In their guest blog "Networking Reconsidered" on Harvard Business Review.com, authors John Hagel III and John Seely Brown argue that social media should not be seen as a manipulative exchange to gather a large contact list but as an opportunity to learn. "It is not who you know, but what you learn from, and with, who you know."
5. **Be genuine, be human.** Approach social media conversations as you would any face-to-face meeting with a friend. "Even if you are representing a company or brand and are using the 'voice of the company'

- **Uncover new ideas:** as you share experiences with others, you broaden your perspective and glean new approaches. This is particularly vital in IT where products and trends are constantly evolving.
- **Improve knowledge and skills:** well-rounded networking includes attending educational forums and professional association meetings, or participating in online discussions where, for instance, a human resources professional can access the latest research on benefits policies and hear from industry thought leaders on employee motivation.
- **Become a valued resource:** as you help a colleague, supplier or partner, you grow professionally and personally. You gain the pleasure of helping others along with recognition.

With the rise of social media alongside traditional avenues, opportunities for networking are exploding. How do you select the best venues that make efficient use of your time?

- Start with a plan. Set specific goals, know whom you want to reach and where you are most likely to find them. Balance the type of networks you join with the amount of participation you can commit.
- Enter a network with a clear understanding of what you can offer *and* what you need. Be able to articulate the advantages someone will gain from their relationship with you, and be ready to respond when someone asks how they can help you.
- Be willing to volunteer. Use your plan as a guide for when to say yes, or no, as necessary.
- Especially when you first join a group, whether traditional or digital, listen before you talk. Ask open-ended questions to create real conversations.
- Be proactive about follow through. Contact people you want to know better and ask to meet. Follow up promptly on any referrals.
- Be genuine and authentic in all your networking interactions. People will ultimately respond with trust.
- Always be ready to network. Opportunities come when you least expect them, even while traveling or shopping. Be open and passionate about your work and your profession.

THE HISTORY OF... LinkedIn: How 350 grew to over 55 million in less than 7 years

or 'voice of the brand' you can still be human," reminds Aliza Sherman, author of the 2009 book *Golden Rules of Social Media*. "Remember that people are on the receiving end of everything you put out."

6. **Take concrete, practical steps to achieve your social media goals.** Social media may be new and still somewhat glamorous, but it demands the consistency and piece-by-piece labor behind any successful business strategy. Set aside small, planned chunks of time to check profiles, read posts and share comments. To reach a more targeted audience on a site such as LinkedIn, create and administer your own group around a topic related to your niche. Establish yourself as a "thought leader" by contributing relevant posts to forums and sharing experience-based answers to queries.

If 2010 becomes your year to "do social media," will you be glad you made the effort when you're on the threshold of 2011? It all depends on what you want to accomplish and who you want to have share your experience.

"Quit counting fans, followers and blog subscribers like bottle caps," admonishes Amber Nasland in *Social Media Today*. "Think, instead, about what you're hoping to achieve with and through the community that actually cares about what you're doing."

LasoConnect: Laso has formed a Strategic Partnership with Unicatis Marketing to promote their *"intheloop" Professional Training Series*. This series of seminars will help you and your firm build your Information Technology/ Company brand through Social Media.

After completing the course you will have a custom blog, a professionally designed Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook Fan Page; a information-packed workbook to help you keep your strategy, tools, and time organized; a general fluency and understanding of best practices in all the major social media sites; and a plan to meet your business social media goals.

If you are interested in learning more about the "intheloop" Professional Training Series, please contact Laurie at Laso 630-260-8500.

TECH CORNER: Can you speak NetWord?



Every innovation sparks its own lingo, and the social media side of networking is no exception. Unless your network consists largely of teenagers, you probably won't use most of the 27 acronyms listed below, but it could be useful (and fun!) to know some of these trendy txt-type terms. If nothing else, you will surprise some of the hippest members of your family.

Plus, courtesy of Laso, we're offering a Starbucks Gift Card to the first three Laso e-Letter subscribers who can provide the most accurate translation of the most terms. Just email your answers to Laso (lswanson@lasocareers.com) by 2/26/2010. All judges' decisions are final!

Acronyms:

On May 5, 2003, five enterprising professionals invited about 350 of their most trusted contacts to "link" to them in a new online professional network. Only one month after their fledgling website went live, LinkedIn boasted 4,500 members. By the end of 2003, the Mountain View, California-based network had multiplied to 81,000 members, with half based outside the U.S.

Nearly seven years later, LinkedIn has over 55 million members, representing at least 160 industries in over 200 countries. According to the company's website, a new member joins LinkedIn almost every second, which helps explain how the network approximately doubles in size every year.

Site services have expanded along with membership. A small sample: the first premium service, LinkedIn Jobs, started March 2005, member newsfeeds launched in June 2006, Profile Pictures added in September of 2007, and a mobile platform began in February 2008. A wide array of premium and subscription services continue to be added along with enhancements to the basic free profile and network capabilities.

The story behind the company that celebrated its sixth birthday with 600 cupcakes on May 5, 2009 (the May 5th date is dubbed by employees "Cinco de LinkedIn") is far more than impressive growth statistics. The idea hatched by five friends in the living room of co-founder Reid Hoffman has transformed the concept of networking, and turned the online version from a novelty into an essential business tool.

In a 2006 Business Week article, another LinkedIn co-founder, Konstantin Guericke, explained how his passion for networking fueled the creation of the now widely popular website. "Word of mouth cuts through all," he said. "People are relying more than ever on recommendations from people they know. People tend to . . . make business decisions by drawing on personal networks. [They] fall back on trusted relationships."

If you're not yet on LinkedIn, it's an easy place to jump in and quickly become active. Set up a detailed profile, begin to reach out to your current contacts, manage your presence and activity, and over time you will boost your credibility and visibility.

Build Your Network One Meal at a Time-Book Review

LOL	BRB	GTG
NIMBY	MYOB	TAFN
TGIF	AFAIC	NP
TTYL	IMHO	BBL
ROFL	L8R	FYI
JGI	IRL	BTW
OMG	NSFW	JAS
IDK	IIRC	THX
TTFN	FWIW	FTW

--Thanks to Luisa Buehler, fellow recruiter and President of The Hire Solution, administrative recruiting specialists, for providing this fun list.

About Laso

Laso has been in business for over 12 years, and Laurie Swanson has been recruiting now for almost 20 years!

Laso is committed to being your experts in helping you build your Information Technology teams with the best people available.

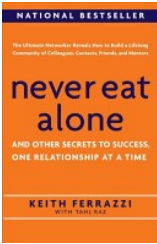
These could be people who are experts at implementing or integrating ERP packages like SAP, Oracle, JD Edwards, Data Warehousing technologists, AS/400 and certified e-commerce and web developers (Microsoft and Java), Enterprise and Solution Architects, Business Analysts, and Project Managers.

Laso has also grown along with our clients to incorporate our stellar search skills in the sourcing and placement of Management and Executive Professionals in Information Technology, Operations, Finance and Human Resources along with providing additional business consulting services as needed.



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Make sure your calendar and your "Golden Rolodex" are at your fingertips while reading Keith Ferrazzi's book *Never Eat Alone and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2005). Written and published in 2005 with co-author Tahl Raz, this book will light a fire under you immediately to begin filling your calendar with coffee dates, lunches, and dinner invitations with people who will open the doors to the kingdom, whatever kingdom you're taking on.

Mr. Ferrazzi's own rags-to-riches story is inspiring--his father was a steel worker who knew enough to introduce his young son to people who could help him succeed. The author moves beyond his own real-life examples (Yale, Harvard, Deloitte, and now his own company, Ferrazzi Greenlight) to offer you concrete, actionable tips on how to build relationships that will net you joy as well as profit. The not-so-secret secret? "I learned that *real* networking was about finding ways to make *other* people more successful," Ferrazzi writes.

Some of his more salient concepts:

- **Do your homework.** Before meeting someone, use all the tools at your disposal (Internet, public library, annual reports) to learn as much as you can about the person you're connecting with.
- **Share your passions.** Doing so build a greater level of intimacy, and it's through sharing them that we not only energize others, but we also nourish ourselves.
- **Master the "Deep Bump."** This involves making a connection that's brief but has enough impact to set the stage for a follow-up meeting.
- **Practice the art of "pinging."** Pinging allows you to connect quickly and casually, over time, with everything from a quick phone call to leveraging e-mail and social media to stay engaged.

With warm examples of reciprocity, Mr. Ferrazzi emphasizes the time-worn but refreshing concept that we can't get until we give. This book offers dozens of concrete ideas on how to get over yourself and get busy building relationships that will enrich your life and contribute to you and your career or business--whatever mission you're on.

Vickie Austin, founder of CHOICES Worldwide, is a keynote speaker, writer and business coach who is on a mission to help people accomplish their missions. She is the author a new e-Book,

"Your Golden Rolodex: How to Network for Results!" available at www.choicesworldwide.com.

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