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# Professional Networking FOR DUMMIES<sup>®</sup>



**Donna Fisher**  
Bestselling coauthor of *Power Networking*

***A Reference for the Rest of Us!***<sup>™</sup>

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# ***Professional Networking For Dummies***

**by Donna Fisher**



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# About the Author

Donna Fisher found out early on that she was an introvert — and yet, she also knew that she had a strong desire to connect with people and didn't want to be so shy. She noticed, time after time, that shyness would get in the way of her doing things she wanted to do. Through hard work and intense concentration, she gradually began to step outside her comfort zone. Now, she's a world-renowned networking expert and teaches others the networking skills that have made her a success.

Donna started her own business because she wanted to speak to groups and teach people how to connect, communicate, and create success together. She wanted people to see how the true spirit of networking could change their life in a positive way. By putting her networking skills to use, she grew her business from zero to six figures and has continued to grow it by approximately 30 percent every year.

Donna has developed *People Power* programs that are conducted at corporate meetings, conferences, and conventions around the world. She has also written four books, including *Power Networking* and *People Power*, which have been translated into four languages, and *Power NetWeaving*.

As a member of the National Speakers Association, Donna received her designation as a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) in 1998. At that time, she became one

of 295 speakers in the world to receive the CSP designation. Her programs, *Drumming Up Business* and *Powerful Connections: The People Side of Business*, are often presented as the kick-off presentation for meetings, conferences, and conventions.

Her company, Donna Fisher Presents, focuses on connecting business with people and people with life. Donna helps companies bring out the best in their people and works with people to help them build strong alliances with each other.



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# Introduction

**T**hroughout your life, you will find yourself in situations where you are expected to be personable, friendly, interesting, and a great conversationalist. Instead, you feel uncomfortable, your palms are sweaty, your heart is fluttering, and your mind goes blank. What's a person to do?

Realize that you are not alone. Most people at some time and in certain situations feel shy, uncomfortable, awkward, and ineffective at connecting and communicating with others. No matter how shy or uncomfortable you feel, you can develop the confidence and ease that others portray.

Or perhaps you don't have any problem being with other people. You love to be around others and you light up when you walk into a room full of strangers. But you don't really feel like you have a *professional* network — a group of people who can help you work smarter and better to get ahead professionally.

Whatever your strengths and weaknesses are, you can learn to be a better networker. Learn how to be with people, talk with people, stay in touch with people, and build powerful relationships. Learn to network. Your network has a direct influence on the success and satisfaction that you experience in all areas of life.

You already network, so it's not like we're starting from scratch. Every time you ask for a recommendation for a good restaurant, movie, auto mechanic, or business consultant, you are networking. And every time you recommend someone, whether it's a realtor, printer, graphics designer, or doctor, you are networking. Networking is building connections with other people for the opportunity to give and receive value to each other.

It's really not so difficult. In fact, you may discover it can be fairly simple — and fun. Yes, you may need to step out of your comfort zone and practice your communication skills. And developing some new habits will be important so that your networking can be an easy, natural part of your life.

Learning to network effectively can be the single biggest factor that contributes to your professional success and personal satisfaction. Give yourself a chance. Networking is the chance of a lifetime — the chance to establish valuable contacts and a powerful support system.

## **About This Book**

Between these covers, I attempt to cover everything you need to know about networking. I try to answer all your questions and give you the information you need to be successful. You'll notice some chapters focus on the attitude and philosophy of networking, while others

focus on the skills — listening, asking, praising, being organized — that are important when networking. And some chapters focus on various situations and times in life when networking is important.

Ideally, this book will become your networking workbook. Use a highlighter to mark the sentences and examples that are most meaningful to you. Jot down your ideas in the margins and between the paragraphs. Every place where I give an example, take a minute to write down your own example. Take the ideas from this book and put them into your own words and your real-life situations.

Every time you find an idea that you want to implement in your life, highlight it and then go to the back of the book, to the Appendix, and list that action as part of your networking action plan. This book is designed to be a catalyst for action and results in your life.

# How This Book Is Organized

Although you may choose to read the book from cover to cover, it is organized so that you can easily find the chapters and sections that relate to your specific interests and needs. So feel free to jump in wherever you choose.



# **Part I: Networking: What It Is, What It Isn't, and What It Can Do for You**

In Part I, I give you a chance to review your thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs about networking. You are encouraged to get rid of the misperceptions and misunderstandings about networking that you may have so that you can develop a style of connecting with people that is effective and beneficial.

## **Part II: Building and Maintaining Your Network**

This part gives you specific information on how to network. I give you information on how to introduce yourself, ask for support, initiate small talk, listen effectively, and follow through appropriately. You are given examples that you can customize for yourself and ideas on the habits that will best support your networking goals.

# **Part III: Using Your Network: Networking Opportunities**

This part covers how to network throughout life — when starting your career, during job transition, in the corporate world, as an entrepreneur, as you move into retirement, and during times of personal and professional growth.

# **Part IV: Networking Challenges**

If you think that you're too shy or too busy to network, then this part of the book is for you. You discover the challenges and strengths of introverts and extroverts and how both styles can use their strengths to enhance their networking. I also write about the unique challenges faced by men and women. I give you information on how to use technology appropriately as a tool for connecting with others. You even discover the etiquette associated with handling business cards and hosting a business event.

# Part V: The Part of Tens

Finally, I give you these short, easy-to-read chapters with information on small talk, name recall, avoiding networking turnoffs, and becoming a masterful networker.

## Icons Used in the Book

One of the features of *For Dummies* books is the use of icons that highlight useful information to make it easy to find. To help guide you through this book, here are the icons to watch for with information on what each icon represents.



This icon calls to your attention the information that is important to always keep in mind.



This information is a warning of things that can easily go wrong with your networking. Take these cautions seriously, and you will have a smooth, successful networking experience.



These are real-life stories of people just like you who have experienced networking success.



This icon highlights helpful hints and ideas on how to increase your networking effectiveness.



The ideas in this book are only as good as the actions you put behind them. This icon represents where most of the value of this book gets created —

in your actions. When you come to this icon, it's time to put into practice what you've been reading about.

## **Where to Go from Here**

This book provides information that can enhance your success and satisfaction starting today and continuing throughout the rest of your life. Every piece of information put into action creates a result — that result may show up immediately or in the future. You have started the process by picking up this book and reading this far. You may want to continue from here and read straight through the book, making notes as you go. Or you may want to review the table of contents and pick the part or chapter that either seems the most interesting or the most scary — and jump in. Allow each chapter or section to lead you to what's next for you. Networking is a process of meeting people, making connections with people, and being a resource for people. It is a never-ending process because you will always be meeting and interacting with people and your interactions with people will always create a ripple effect of results. Thank you for choosing this book as part of your networking process.