



GURU G with IDE

Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with
Allison K Summers

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NETWORKING TO SUCCEED

A QUICK INTRODUCTION

TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'Guru Guide' is an attempt to refine decades of hard-earned expertise into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

The Guru Guide has a pre-determined format:

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

INTRODUCING



**VIDUSHA
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.

INTRODUCING ALLISON K SUMMERS



After an illustrious and extremely successful career in the 'corporate world' Allison moved to the NGO sector where she eventually navigated to the helm of possibility with one of the oldest, longstanding women's organizations in the World – Zonta International. Through her experiences, Allison holds the ability to see 'both sides' of the organizational spectrum which gives Allison a unique perspective to success in any setting as well as enables her to appreciate the importance of 'networking' in its fullest extent.

A passionate advocate of people and progress all her life, Allison doesn't believe in short-term 'feel good' factors when it comes to social good – but rather she focuses on having sustainability at the very core of the community work being done and

seeks to ensure unhealthy charitable dependencies are not established in the first place. This structured, holistic and pragmatic approach to the development and advocacy work she does ensure that whatever success may be achieved is sustained for the longer term – and eventually, self-reliance is built in individuals and communities.

Understanding that whether it is business or societal change, all positive forward movement takes connecting with the right people, intelligence, and energy, and that is why Allison wrote her own book on it: Connect to Influence. Allison is an international best-selling author, podcast host of Disruptive CEO Nation, contributor to Forbes, speaker, as well as held seats on numerous volunteer organizations.

When you meet Allison, she will almost always be sure to connect you to another great individual in her own network.

HOW AND WHY DID YOU GET INTO THE NGO SECTOR ?



When I look back, I am always amazed at the career I have been able to achieve, but there was this point where I was getting burned out and to be honest, I may not have been doing my best work. At the same time, I welcomed my third child and so, after many years in corporate chasing profit, I felt there had to be another way.

Now most of my career had been in the live event marketing arena, and so my first step was to serve in a leadership role for the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (now Excellence) which is a professional trade organization in the MICE space (meetings, incentives, congresses, and events). This role was fantastic as I learned how NGO's and foundations work and I was able to travel the world which only fueled my love for meeting people and appreciating their stories.

Then I had a remarkable opportunity to take my skills and serve Zonta International, a great NGO whose focus was elevating the status of women in the world. Along the way, I also volunteered and served on some truly incredible boards, including two turns as the president of the American Marketing Association Chicago. I have been fortunate that my experiences have taken me to over thirty countries and I have seen the needs of many people in tough situations first-hand. What most people desire is safe and productive lives which includes education and economic opportunities, and governments can't do it all and so the world needs NGO's.

NETWORKING - WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT ?



Networking is essential for success in the modern world - now more than ever before...

See : none of us can actually reach great heights alone. We all need help. And we need the right kind of help. Unless we know who to turn to for what - and unless we have these 'resources' on a first name basis - chances are you will not be able to get the help you need...

So, YES, networking IS important...

Here is a fun fact. There was a piece of research done on 'average', 'effective' and 'successful' (effective being managers those who met their KPIs almost all the time without fail, and successful managers being those who got promoted/grew in their careers faster than others) and found that effective managers spent most of their time on communications, and those who were successful spent most of their time on networking. Now, don't read into this too much as ask if networking is the same as kissing up - because it is NOT - and understand that in any culture, in any sector, in any context, 'knowing people' is indeed a huge benefit.

Remember - being able to 'influence' is far more important than having formal power even in leadership positions : and one key ingredient in being able to influence is through the strength of the network you have...

I AM INTROVERTED - AND I AM A LITTLE MEDIA SHY - HOW DO I START 'PUTTING MYSELF OUT THERE' ?



Most people think building a network and 'being popular' are the same thing. It can be - but doesn't HAVE TO BE. You can certainly build a solid network never ever being popular OR being 'out there.'

See : building a network is about connecting with people. This is a one on one activity : not a mass scale 'like' seeking expedition. No matter how you look at it - true 'value adding' networks are built on personalised relationships - and it is done over time - never over a brief encounter alone...

So, start on your network one person at a time. The key is this - that you keep at it. IF you are introverted - even deeply so - you will STILL have the ability to 'connect' one on one - in fact, chances are you will connect more deeply than extroverts - so, play it to your advantage - rather than looking at it as an impediment...

Remember - being introverted and being 'sociable' are not mutually exclusive. There are many, some of us who are writing this included, who are actually introverted - but we are sociable - there IS a difference !



INFLUENCE

- What is influence and how can it be used to get it?
- How can influence help you stay relevant in an ever-changing world?
- What is the connection between influence and economic opportunity?
- How do executive leaders think and act on influence?

The right business connections can gain influence and deliver amazing benefits.

Through an expanded network of influential supporters you will be positioned to gain access to leadership excellence, leverage diverse paths to resources, engage in powerful insights, create business and career opportunities and form lasting partnerships.

In this book, individuals will obtain a roadmap to develop a practice of connecting to attain influence and grab hold of life's best opportunities.

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Come Into Your
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HOW TO LEVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS FOR
A LIFETIME OF CAREER
SUCCESS

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CONCEPT 1 : QUALITY VS QUANTITY



When it comes to building networks - quality trumps quantity ANY DAY...

You are actually far far better off having a smaller group of absolutely tightly knit individuals rather than having a whole heap of 'acquaintances' - some of whom you don't even know how you know !

Remember - a network is a tight knit group - people you know well - know you well - and also, share insights and ideas and inputs regularly. They may not be whom you classify as 'friends' necessarily - but they are certainly a lot more than acquaintances also. It certainly HELPS if your network is also your FRIENDS - but it doesn't necessarily have to be.

A solid network is :

- » Varied in their interests and fields of expertise
- » Preferably common in the values they uphold
- » Willing to help each other when required

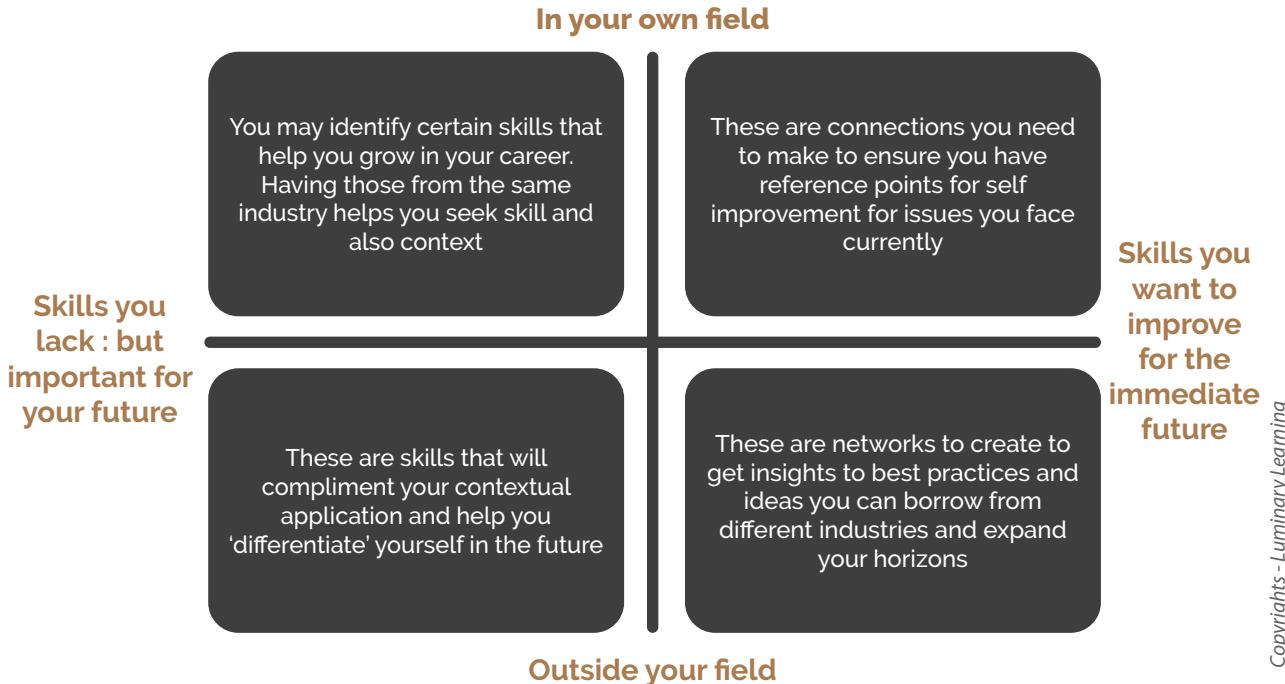
TOOL 1 : HOW TO DECIDE WHO TO 'CONNECT' WITH

In all seriousness - it helps to have a network that is varied : and not limited to your current/future skills alone. The grid we have offered is to get you started.... When you get the 'hang of' networking, start growing your reach in the mix of people you connect with :

- A.** Thought leaders - to get insights
- B.** Those who lead causes you are passionate about - to get into meaningful volunteerism and expand your horizons through it
- C.** Social influencers - to garner support when required
- D.** Internal influencers (within the organisation) to garner support for the projects you passionately believe in

Remember - you don't have to always look at your professional life also - a solid network helps you become a better person as much as a more effective professional.

So, when building a network look at skills and competencies from a successful life perspective as well.



CONCEPT 2 : NEUTRALITY VS BEING OPINIONATED



Something you need to really understand is that you are often 'judged' by the 'company' you keep. Unfair - yes - but inevitable !

Remember the age old saying 'birds of a feather flock together' : well - most actually believe this. VERY few people will look at you PURELY as an individual - and as such, when you start 'interacting' with your network - specially in social media spaces, many will start looking at you in the same light those in the network are seen. So, be mindful that your 'reputation' is built as much based on what 'they' post and comment on as much as what you do.... So, be mindful...

You can choose one of two broad strategies :

- » Neutrality : where you are not actively 'involved' in anything apart from your professional scope of work - or your vocation. Your personal view on anything apart from your profession is kept private - and you remain neutral on all aspects.
- » Being Opinionated : you are 'out there' and will take sides when you want to.

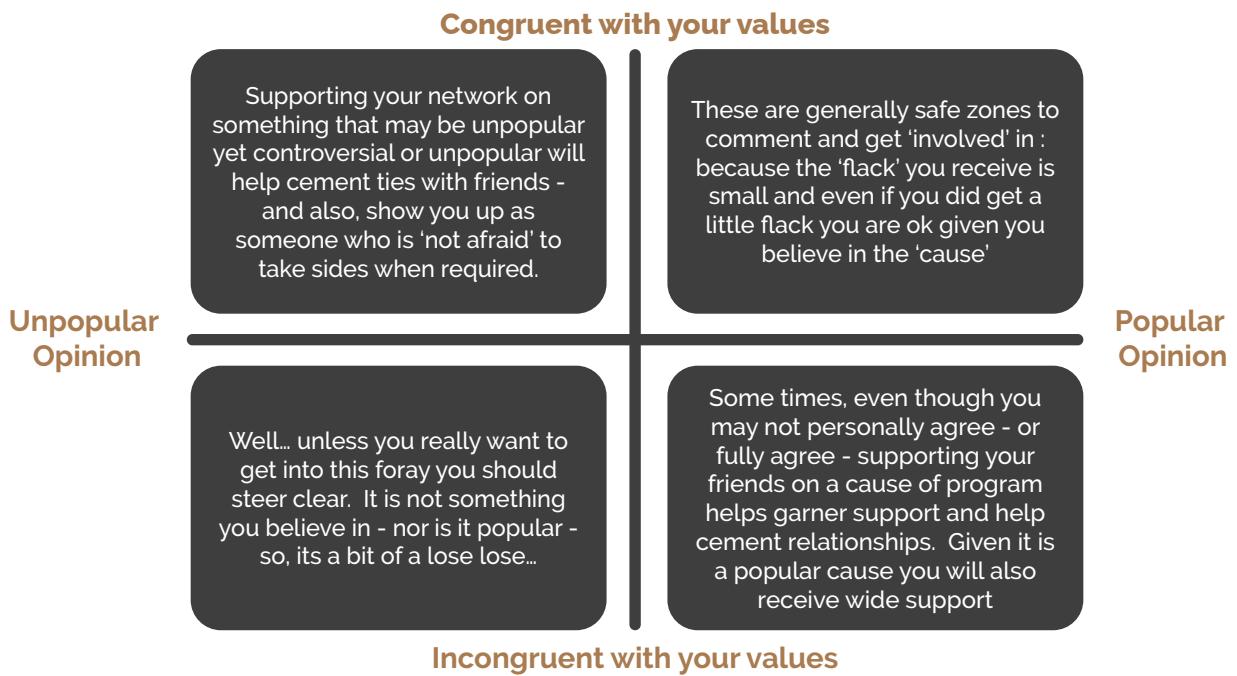
Remember you can't (at least is really really difficult to) be both. IF you take sides PURELY based on friendships you will create a reputation of being 'biased' which is never good when it comes to building a professional persona. However, whether you are opinionated or neutral - both will have positives and negatives : and what you choose depends purely on who you are - and what you want to achieve through your 'image'. Your network can help you either way...

TOOL 2 : CONSCIOUS SIDE TAKING

Personally, we will always advice you not to do anything that you are personally convinced about - but this might be a slightly moralistic and impractical approach. Specially inside organisational settings, there are times when your personal values may clash with popular opinion and visa versa. It is important to stand up for what you believe in - but it is equally important to allow the same freedom to others...

How does this affect a network: well, here is the thing. Your network will seek your support often times - as much as you seek their support. You need to decide which you will support - and which you will not - and both support and not supporting will have consequences. You support - you must be ok to live with the 'consequences' that come your way. You don't support - you must be ok with your network looking at you sideways and mistrusting you a little (unless you have a reputation for impartiality that is established)

Don't be naive about the ways of the world. Choose your responses every time - never get suckered into them.



CONCEPT 3 : WORKING THE COCKTAIL CIRCUIT

Whenever anyone talks about networking, 'cocktail circuits' come up. Cocktails are indeed a popular approach to bring the 'who's who' together and make small talk and make introductions - and also, help widen networks through informal settings.

Organising cocktails and also, getting invited to cocktails is something all corporates and organisations generally resort to in order to facilitate the networking process...

However, being at a cocktail is useless if you are going to simply hog the food (generally the food is exceptionally good at these events) and soak up enough alcohol to give you a hangover for days (yep - it's free!).

One thing I say when I speak is that you can't go to a networking event with a B&B approach – that is bathroom and bar. If you are in one of those two places you are not doing it right.

The PURPOSE of a cocktail is also not to talk to just one person you already know and make a hasty retreat - it is to mix, mingle, exchange business cards, 'fish' for possible opportunities to collaborate/do business and also, 'make an impression' in someone's mind.

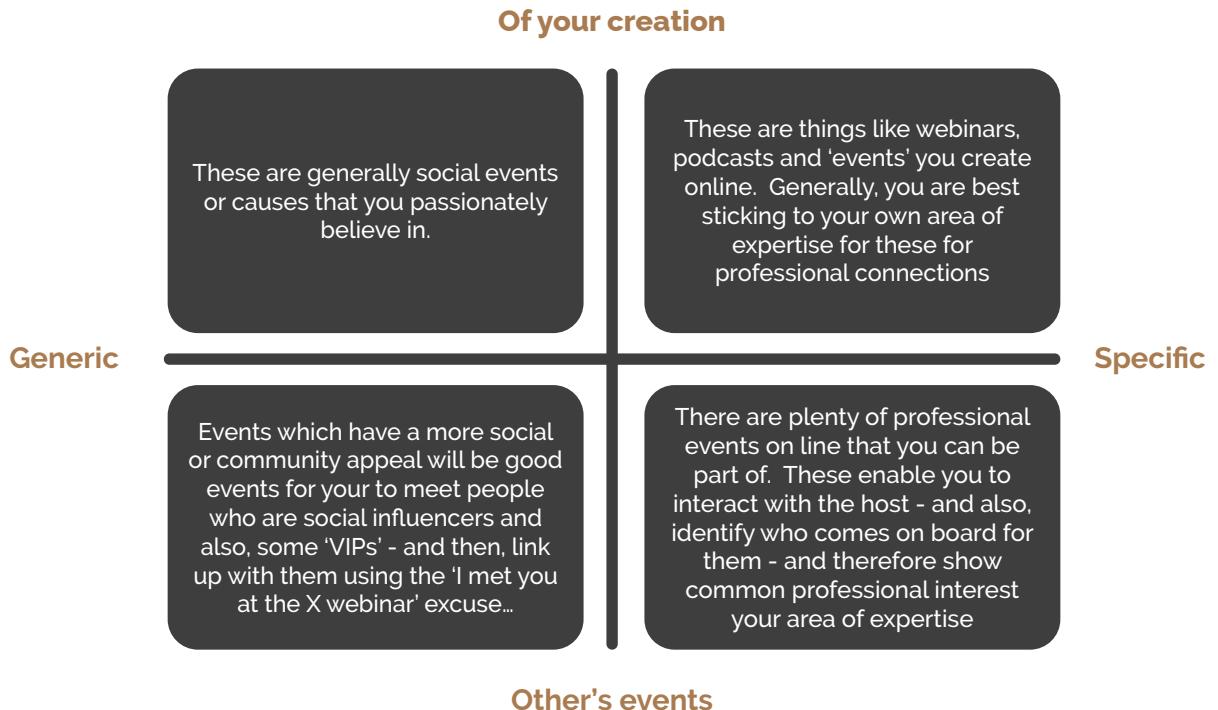
Take in the 'concept' - forget cocktails per se. Treat every meeting, gathering, event and opportunity to do what you would do at a cocktail. Move between tables, talk to people, carry your business cards (even to a funeral) and see if you can meet someone who will be of interest.

Remember - networking is NOT limited to formal events - EVERY social interaction is an opportunity to build a network...

TOOL 3 : COCKTAILS ON LINE

Technology today enables you to have many many opportunities to 'mix and mingle' - either in groups or one on one. Make use of these to ensure you keep growing your network - and widening the group of people you interact and socialise with.

Sometimes, there really isn't a substitute to meeting people one on one in person - for sure - but, look at all the international 'friends' you have on line - and ask yourself whether you can EVER meet ALL of them in person. Chances are, your network will be terribly local if this was the case.... So, create social spaces to enable you to network - making full use of technology.



REMEMBER - TO REALLY HAVE A SOLID NETWORK YOU NEED TO ADD VALUE TO IT TOO...



Remember - as with any human interaction - networking will never work fully if YOU don't add to your network also.

The richness of the content you share, insights you offer, help you give, criticisms and cautions you personally (never publicly) offer, as well as the genuine effort you make to enrich your network's personal and professional growth will be what makes YOU a valuable person to THEM.

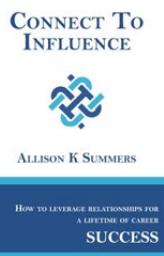
It is not good enough to have a network to merely enable you to succeed - if this is the case - it will not be too long before people see you as a 'leech' who only sucks things out of people selfishly - only to 'fall off' when your 'fill' is done...

So, remember - networking is a two way street - ALWAYS...

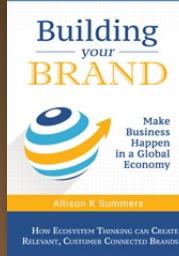
SOME FINAL PIECES OF ADVICE

- » Networking serves as a force multiplier – Your experiences, knowledge and network are limited, but when you can connect the dots of what you know with that of others you can accelerate your path to solutions and resources saving time and money and creating opportunity.
- » Hold a connective vision – Chart your course to collect and cultivate your community of supporters and plan when and how you will make it to face to face events. Or set aside time once a week to virtually build contacts. The more people who know you, then the greater odds that people will come to you for your services in their point of need.
- » Know your needs – Prior to walking into a room, think of three problems you have that if you had a magic wand to wave that they could be solved: people that you want to meet, service providers you wish you knew, industry information you need, and so on. If you walk into the room knowing what you want to walk away with you will be more likely to inject it into conversations and get answers.
- » Boldly walk into the room – Be confident, even when it is hard. If you are alone, here are three tips. 1) ask the host or desk team to introduce you to someone. 2) Walk up to a group of three people – one is always not talking and so you can work your way in. 3) Stand purposefully in the center of the room with your drink facing the door – the next soul who is alone will gravitate to you– it sounds crazy, but it works.
- » Measure your progress – While networking is not a quantitative numbers game, you should still set goals and measure against those goals. If you need to develop more contacts in a specific industry, or you have a company contact list or you simply wish to expand your LinkedIn connections, but purposeful on when and where you spend your time. Invest in the right opportunities.

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