

# 35 Tips to Build Lasting Strategic Relationships



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## Strategic Relationships: The Foundation to Learning & Growth

Building strategic relationships is an important part of the learning and development process. It's about being resourceful. It's about learning from others and knowing how to connect with people. It's about knowing how to ask for things that you need and having a mentor to guide you. From a corporate standpoint, we all know that talent is our number one asset. Without talent...and proper training of that talent...we would not have growth or success. This information is designed to help you, and your team, learn how to build strategic relationships as a foundation for personal growth and success. This will undoubtedly transfer to overall success for your organization as well.



This e-book will also help you be thoughtful and strategic about relationship building. This will teach you to go about it in a way that's the best use of your time and your strengths, plus it will help you create the most value for your network. Building strategic relationships is an art and a skill that has helped me tremendously in growing our company over the past five years. Even more importantly, I've connected and partnered with many dynamic, successful, and impactful business people that I wouldn't have otherwise had the opportunity to meet.

When I ventured into the world of entrepreneurship in 2007, I went from representing a very well-known technology company to representing myself and my startup – in a completely different industry. Talk about a humbling experience! I've learned a tremendous amount in that time, and probably one of the most important lessons is the value of relationships and connecting with others.

Being a leader when it comes to building strategic relationships goes way beyond simply “making contacts” or “networking.” To me, those phrases represent a one-way street. Strategic relationships are always a two-way street. Leaders recognize that it takes a two-way street to create the best value and the best outcomes in your business relationships. That two-way street can begin with you and this e-book.

This e-book contains 35 strategies and tips I've personally put into practice over the past five years. They can be used whether you're an entrepreneur or you're in a corporate position. They can be used regardless of how outgoing or introverted you may be! It's designed to help you and your teams build successful relationships as a foundation for personal growth and success. This will undoubtedly transfer to overall success for your organization as well.

To get the most from it, I encourage you to read all of the tips first. Highlight the ones that will help you with where you're at on your leadership or career path. Then select one or two to implement first – I recommend 30 days of consistent work to make the habit stick. Better yet, work with a colleague or mentor for some added accountability. Continue to work on the tips you've highlighted, one or two at a time.

By sharing this with you, I hope to help you benefit from the same types of rewarding relationships I've been fortunate enough to build in my career. If you like what you've read, please forward this on within your organization.

Visit us at [www.impactinstruction.com](http://www.impactinstruction.com) to subscribe to the *Impact ezine*, and learn more about our learning and development and leadership offerings.

To Your Success,



Amy Franko and the Team at Impact Instruction

## 35 Tips to Build Lasting Strategic Relationships

### 1. **Adopt the mindset that relationship building is part of your job and development.**

No matter your job title, building relationships is in the description, and it should be part of your development planning. Anywhere from 5-10% of your work week should be dedicated to building relationships. If you're used to being too busy and heads down in your work or always eating lunch at your desk, it's time to take a different view.



Before I started Impact Instruction Group, I was in technology sales for IBM and later in their PC Division spinoff, Lenovo. IBM is a huge company, but I made it a point to get to know people in various lines of business across the country. I also made it a point to know our key external business partners. I adopted the idea that this was part of my job and it made me a better business person – it was a smart investment. In fact, it helped me to get things done faster and better help my customers. It also built my leadership skills and I was able to contribute more to the

bottom line goals of our team. One thing I've learned is that this mindset is challenging to build in a home office environment, but it can be done! If you're in a home office, make sure you are getting into the office or meeting people from your office regularly.

2. **Know your big picture.** Take some time to create a vision of what successful relationship building looks like for you. What would you like to accomplish in the next year? The next 3-5 years? What does the next phase of your career look like – do you want to change industries, become an entrepreneur, become a leader, join a board, or work internationally? The answers to those questions will help you be much more strategic and make the most of the time you invest in building relationships.

3. **Blend the strategic and the tactical.** When you have a basic vision, your strategy and tactics will help you accomplish that. Think of strategy as the general direction in which you'd like to go. Tactics are the specific actions you'll take to get there. For example, I have a vision to help women grow into higher positions of leadership because I believe that will make our companies more competitive and our communities stronger. One of

my key strategies is to work with large organizations that are developing their emerging women leaders. That's a general direction in which I'd like to go.

My tactics are the specific actions to take around marketing, sales, and programming. To put that in the context of building relationships, that general direction also helps me to determine what relationships I'll need to build and the value I'll need to create in order to accomplish the strategy and overall vision.

#### 4. **Don't ever treat people like "strategies" or "tactics."**

I get asked this question a lot: "How do you build a network of relationships without coming across as self-serving?" The answer is that I make sure I'm not *being* self-serving. When I know I'm being sincere and keeping others' interests in mind, I trust that it won't come across as anything less than that.



(Asking for what you need from time-to-time isn't being self-serving, as long as you are also providing value to that person and creating the right balance in the relationship.)

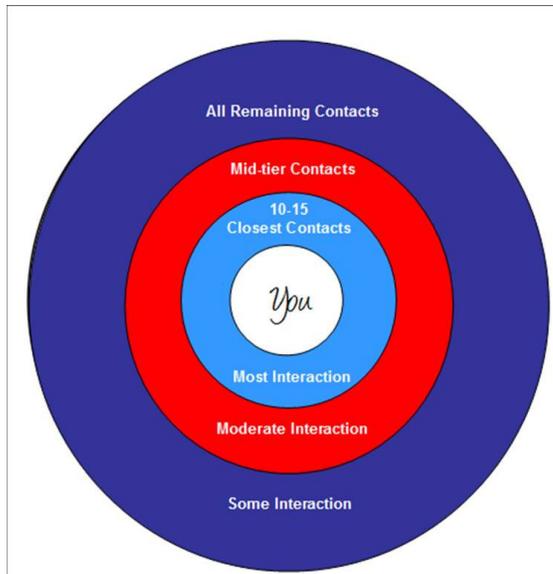
While realizing your vision and goals all require strategy and tactics to succeed, your relationships must never be treated in that way. Always nurture your relationships and treat people in a way that inspires mutual likeability, trust, and respect.

5. **Know your communication style.** Any number of assessment tools can help you to determine your best communication style and preferences. And while you can't possibly know the communication style of every person you meet, when you understand your style, you can generally gauge the style of those around you. For example, in the DiSC assessment, I am almost equal parts "C" and "I," which means that I am naturally inclined to be an influencer as well as someone who is focused on quality. Knowing those things about myself, as well as the other traits in the assessment, I'm able to better gauge those traits in others. I can then tailor my communication style to that person's preferences and focus on what's important to them.

6. **Look at your network like a set of circles.** In our uber-connected world, we have almost instant contact with as many people as we want, and we have access to broad networks of people. To be practical, not everyone in your network needs or deserves the

same level of attentiveness. The key is to be mindful about who we choose to build lasting connections with, and those who may be more social, informal, or distant connections.

Think of your network as a set of circles, with you in the center. The smallest circle represents your closest relationships, those 10-15 people that you interact with most



often. The next circle is a bit wider, representing a mid-tier of relationships – a larger number of people that you interact with less often. The widest circle contains the most people and your furthest connections – think of them more as contacts. A good example of this is your third-degree connections on LinkedIn, or people that you connect with very seldom.

As you build strategic relationships, think of those 10-15 people that you would want to be in that smallest circle. Who do you want

to exchange ideas, introductions, opportunities, and feedback with most often? It's not to say that the second and third tier circles are left out, because you can still provide mutual value – it's just on a less-consistent basis. Now with that list of 10-15 people, create a plan for interacting with them and finding out ways to help one another. Revisit the plan every 6 months to make sure those relationships remain strong and mutually beneficial. For resources to help you in creating these networking circles, visit [www.networkding.com](http://www.networkding.com).

7. **Build relationships before you need them.** This is why tip #1 is so important. You've heard the saying that if you need a relationship, it's usually too late to build it. It's often why people end up feeling as though they're being insincere, because continual relationship building isn't a habit built into their everyday life. When you have the mindset that relationship building is an everyday part of your learning and leadership development, you'll likely never fall into that trap.

### 8. Create consistent value.

Small, consistent actions over time build up to great things. I'm always asking myself, "What I've done lately for anyone in my network?" My goal is to offer value, whether to a close connection, or an informal, social contact. For example, did I post that article to my key LinkedIn groups; did I make that introduction as promised; did my e-zine go out as scheduled? These are all actions I commit to within my strategy, and so I aim to be as consistent as possible.



When you're consistent, it's natural to build stronger and more beneficial relationships.

9. **A healthy business relationship is like a bank account.** A good analogy for creating consistent value (#8) is a bank account. A healthy bank account has three basic things: deposits, debits, and cash flow. They work together, and you need all three in the right amounts to be successful. If you apply that analogy to your most successful business relationships, they likely have those three elements and there is genuine value created from both sides. You provide ideas, support, opportunities, or feedback to one another. When you're the one providing those things, they're like deposits into your relationship account. When the other person is providing them, they're like debits to your relationship account. A healthy give and take is the flow that gives the relationship its mutual benefit and overall value.

10. **Aim to give first, in a way that's meaningful to the other person.** Your strategic relationships must be mutually beneficial, or over time those three elements of credits, debits, and flow will be out of balance. "Mutually beneficial" usually begins with one person creating a benefit and the other person reciprocating at some other point in time. I make it a point to be the person initiating that benefit – I aim to give first, and in a way that's meaningful to the other person.

For example, in the course of a conversation I find out what interests that other person has and that leads to figuring out what might be meaningful to give first. It could be connecting that person to a resource, another individual, or a group of people with

shared interests. If I'm meeting someone for the first time, I usually test the waters with something small; maybe a link to a useful resource fits an interest or goal.

**11. Phone calls can build relationships.**

I have an openness to meeting people that I believe helps me to build the right relationships. But there's a fine balance here; you can't open your calendar to everyone, so it's up to you to decide if meeting someone in person is a good fit, or perhaps a phone call introduction will do. I've done many a phone introduction; it helps me to meet new



people quickly and make the most of everyone's time. In a 30-minute call, I can usually discern how I might serve that other person and if it would be mutually beneficial to continue the conversation.

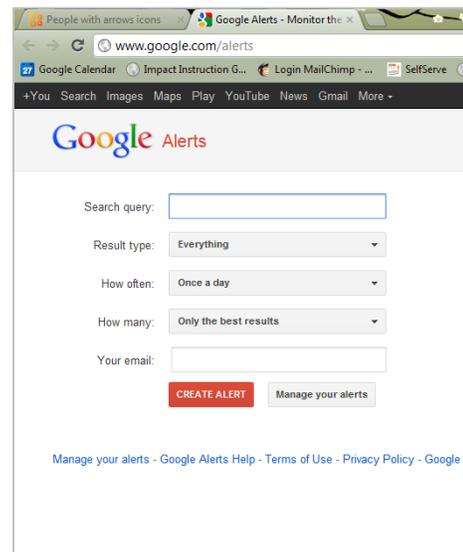
**12. Always have a few open-ended questions on hand.** A little preparedness goes a long way when meeting people for the first time, and especially if you're trying to gauge their communication style, what's meaningful to them, or their goals. I always have a couple of open-ended questions or conversation starters on hand. For example:

- "Tell me a little about what you do."
- "Tell me a little bit about what interested you in this organization."
- "When you're not working, what do you like to do?"
- "How did you get started in your career?"
- "What do you like most about what you do?"

**13. Look for the "click."** When you gather information about what's meaningful to others, you can look for patterns or connections and "click" them together. Your job is to be the connector – the person who clicks together ideas, resources, and people within your network. Becoming skilled at this requires you to be a good listener, and to have a heightened awareness of what's happening in the lives and careers of those in your network.

**14. Go beyond your industry or current circles for connections.** It pays dividends to diversify your connections. Raise your awareness of the circles you spend your time in, and if the circles have become too narrow (i.e., one type of industry, one type of profession), make it a point to widen the circle from time-to-time. Experience new groups of people, new industries, and new interests. I did this just recently when I attended a leadership event sponsored by a healthcare industry group. My background is mainly technology, learning, and entrepreneurship, and to meet people from such a different background broadened my perspective.

**15. Collect and share information that is relevant to people in your network.** I'm always combing through magazines, websites, journals, and the like, and I often come across information that's useful to someone in my network. When I find something, I bookmark it and make note of the people in my network that could use it. Then twice a month I spend an hour sending that information out – via email, sometimes even in a handwritten note. I make every effort to be sure it's relevant to that person, and I personalize the email or note so it stands out. In my experience, that targeted and personal communication makes a difference in cutting through the noise and makes a better connection. If I'm sending an email, I keep the distribution list to five people or less and I don't use the bcc feature – that can come across as spam.



Quick tips to help you aggregate information:

- Google Alerts: Sets up keywords and phrases for companies and topics you are interested in, and you'll receive a periodic email with the results. (Visit [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts))
- LinkedIn Companies: Within your LinkedIn profile you can follow specific companies and their news.

**16. Invite people to an event that speaks to their interests.** If anyone has ever personally invited you to an event that speaks to your interests, I'm sure it made an impression. Once a year, Impact Instruction sponsors a table at a high-profile women's leadership event. I then hand-pick and invite several women to join me – a combination of clients, colleagues, and friends across varying industries and professions. It creates value all around – they're able to interact with one another and learn from a phenomenal event speaker, and it's two or three hours of quality time to connect with some of the fantastic people in my network.

**17. Handwritten notes never go out of style.** I keep a stash of nice stationery and stamps with me at all times and I send notes regularly – as a thank you, or a simple keep in touch. Sometimes I include a relevant article or resource to go along with a note. Handwritten notes are a great way to add value beyond the electronic, and a little unexpected. If this sounds like one more thing on your to-do list, make it easier by creating a system – always have plenty of stock on hand at your office and in your laptop bag so you can quickly write notes in between meetings or while you travel.



**18. Commit to raising your profile through professional organizations.** I have a confession to make. Professional organizations were a well-kept secret for a long time for me, and I never belonged to one until I launched Impact Instruction.

The short version of my story is that I went from a technology sales role in a large organization to the training and development field. The biggest question I get when I share this is "How did you go from technology sales to training and leadership?" It was a broad leap for sure, and the answer is that it was a combination of wanting to indulge my entrepreneurial spirit, plus the right timing and the right opportunity.

I began as an instructional design consultant and spent about two years just learning the industry and taking on independent projects. From there, I began to grow the company into a full-service custom training firm, including women's leadership development programming and public speaking.

In my previous role, it was fairly easy to make connections because I had a big, well-known company and lots of resources behind me. I had a comfort level in my corporate selling role and it didn't occur to me to look outside for other support or resources. When I began Impact Instruction, I was in many ways beginning again. Not only did I not know people in the training field, but more importantly no one knew me.

The reason I tell you that story is because I learned very quickly that I had to commit to raising my profile in order to grow the business. I couldn't just stay where I was and expect to be successful. And if you're in a corporate role with leadership aspirations or wanting to expand your career opportunities, this same lesson can help you too.

In my search to find ways to raise my profile, one common theme emerged: the value of the right professional organizations. I decided that I would commit to finding those organizations that would make a difference for me personally and professionally, and allow me to make an impact on others.

**19. Choose the right organizations.** Once you've committed to raising your profile and building relationships through professional organizations, it pays to be strategic about where you invest your time. Professional organizations can take a considerable amount of time, effort, and expense. Whenever I'm considering an organization, I run through a mental checklist of questions, and I'm looking for a "yes" answer on a few key things:

- Does the organization help me to build skills important to my vision and goals?
- Does it help me to build relationships and make an impact on others, the community, etc?
- Does it help me to connect with influential people?
- Does it help me find opportunities I may not otherwise find?
- Does this group seem like my "tribe?" In other words, do I click with this group, will I have fun, and really want to put the effort in?

**20. Get to know the board of directors and key advisors of professional organizations.**

I've grown so many business relationships and friendships just by getting to know the board members of an organization I join. If you do one thing first in an organization I believe this is it. You'll stand out for making the effort, especially when you keep in touch, offer ideas, or provide valuable feedback to make their lives easier and the organization better. Those board members will think of you first when opportunities arise

– for a board position, a speaking engagement, a new job or client opportunity, or a key introduction.

**21. Join a visible committee or chair a board position.** I can personally attest to the power of volunteering in a board position. First, when you raise your hand to lead, people take notice. Second,

you're now in a position to interact with influencers in your industry. Both raise your profile, and build your trust and credibility. My initial experience with this was joining the programs committee of the very first organization I joined five years ago. I was responsible for



decisions on monthly topics and arranging for speakers, plus I built and led a committee in the process. I regularly interacted with the organization's members, the community of experts I brought in to speak, and learned valuable lessons in team building.

**22. Regularly attend local events and aim to meet at least one new person.** Have you ever gone to event and spent time only with people you know? I'll admit, there are times when I just don't feel like extending myself. But I always regret it later because I know I didn't take full advantage of the opportunity and the time invested to be there. I now make it a point to meet one new person at any event I attend. I sometimes ask for the attendee list ahead of time to get an idea of who may be there. If I receive the attendee list, I'll make note of who I'd like to meet, and also who I'd like to follow-up with afterwards.

**23. Meet the featured speaker at any event you attend.** I make it a goal to meet the featured speakers at any event. This means usually arriving a little early or staying a little later, but it's well worth it. Plus a lot of great connections you'll make with other attendees usually happens before or after the event. You can take this tip a step further by asking an insightful question of the speaker, whether during the event Q/A or afterwards. If the situation applies, ask the person for 15 minutes of his or her time to follow-up with a question via phone, or even ask to meet in person to learn more.

Conferences also provide a great way to interact with featured speakers because they organize meet and greet events.

**24. Attend an annual conference for at least one of the organizations to which you belong.** If your organization has a national conference, go at least once. This is a fantastic way to expand your networking circles with other professionals and thought leaders. It gets you out of the ordinary every-day, and fully immersed in your professional environment. Bonus tip: If you travel with people you know, avoid the temptation to spend all of your time with them. Part of your reason for being there is to meet new people and stretch your development boundaries.

**25. Do an annual review of your organizations.** Once a year, I do an ROI review of my organizations, and I'm looking for several things:

- Content and value of local and national programs
- Overall financial investment
- I ask myself again the questions from tip #19
- Visibility factor (i.e. do I need to belong to the organization because of credentials or industry visibility, community value, etc.)
- Am I putting forth the right level of effort to see ROI, or am I just writing a check?
- Am I making a difference for the organization and its members?

If I can answer those topics/questions in the positive then I'll continue to invest in the organization. Knowing the financial commitment is especially important, because if you're just writing the check and not investing your time, it's not a good overall investment. I aim to belong to no more than 5 organizations at any given time, and of those 5, I choose 3 to invest higher levels of time.

**26. "In Real Life (IRL)" is almost always better than online.** With so many tools at our disposal and time at a premium, it's easy to relegate relationship building to online sources like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and email. In fact, our survey indicated that the top 2 tools you're most likely to use are LinkedIn and email. (Survey results were published in our white paper "Strategic Networking Trends of 2012." Get your copy by visiting [www.impactinstruction.com](http://www.impactinstruction.com).) I'm a huge fan of using technology and social media outlets to build relationships – some of my best connections were initially made online. But remember to also cultivate relationships in real life – don't fall into the trap of

hiding behind social media or email. Every once in a while do a check-in with yourself to see how you're balancing your relationship-building time and make sure you're using a healthy combination of online and "IRL" methods.

**27. Take your online connections offline.** Social media has become a great equalizer in its way to knock down barriers to thought leaders, influencers, and even celebrities. Here's a great example of taking an online connection offline. When Twitter was first gaining ground as a social media

outlet, I followed a well-known best-selling author on women and money. At the time I was creating an interview series and I really wanted to interview this author and had no other tangible way to meet her. So I tweeted



her, sharing (in 140 characters!) how I'd read several of her books and could I set up a 15-minute phone call with her to ask her a few questions? To my pleasant surprise, she tweeted back and said yes that she would be happy to do that. I was able to take that completely online encounter via Twitter to an offline phone conversation. This author is someone I still follow on Twitter to this day and when she comes through town on a book signing or appearance, I make it a point to see her. While I'd consider our connection to be in an outer circle of my network (see #6), that experience taught me that a) thought leaders are not that inaccessible, b) people like to be asked for their advice, and c) you have to take a risk and ask.

**28. Develop relationships with influencers and local industry leaders.** As a follow-up to #27, influencers and thought leaders aren't necessarily best-selling authors or celebrities. Many times they're right in your backyard. I've specifically established relationships with these people on a local level through professional organizations. Two organizations I currently belong to help me meet influential leaders through special invitation-only forums. In each case I either run the forum or belong to the committee that runs the forum. One committee is dedicated to executive women, and the other is dedicated to learning and development leaders. This does two things: it helps me to

better understand what's important to them, and it also helps me to build relationships in a way where I can add value first (see #10).

- 29. Start a blog or e-newsletter.** A training and development client of ours shared with me that he writes an e-newsletter for his internal customers (his internal customers are sales people and sales leaders). He provides information on industry and skill topics of importance to them, plus what's happening in learning and development to better serve them. This is smart on so many levels. It cements him as a business resource and expert for his customers, and it helps him to build relationships with a large and dispersed audience. He's also providing consistent value. It's the same philosophy behind our ezine at Impact Instruction – to provide you with valuable information on learning and leadership and build a community. You can become a regular subscriber by visiting [www.impactinstruction.com](http://www.impactinstruction.com).
- 30. Develop an area of expertise.** Do you have an area of expertise or a specialty skill you're known for? I'll give you an example of how it can build your network and open you to valuable connections. I'm on Twitter regularly and follow an expert in the training and development field with a specialty in social media for trainers (@JaneBozarth). She uses Twitter to share tips on instructional design and social learning – over time she's built quite a following. In fact, through that one area of expertise, she has evolved into a well-known presenter at various training conferences. Think about how you can build a reputation, and a network of relationships, through an interest or specialty. Depending on your overall relationship-building goals, you can tie this to your current profession, a personal interest, or perhaps even a new direction.
- 31. Keep your LinkedIn profile current and fresh.** I feel like this one goes without saying, but it's amazing how many people don't do this! LinkedIn is a top resource for networked professionals, so it's important to take the time to get it current and then maintain it. According to our Strategic Networking Trends survey, 96% of respondents said it's the first place someone will turn to in order to learn more about you. If you're not keeping your profile complete and up to date, you're risking sending a message that says you don't value building relationships.

My profile can offer some examples for you ([www.linkedin.com/in/amyfranko](http://www.linkedin.com/in/amyfranko)). There are also many experts out there who can help if you'd like a deeper dive into optimizing LinkedIn. One of my favorites is Jason Alba – [www.linkedin.com/in/jasonalba](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonalba).

**32. Dig deep into your LinkedIn connections.** To follow on to tip #31, LinkedIn isn't just a tool to keep your profile current, it's also a great resource for building and maintaining relationships. A typical LinkedIn user has hundreds of connections. I myself have over 500. Want to know what I was doing with those connections before I got serious about LinkedIn as a relationship building tool? Not a whole lot! My connections were gathering dust until a past business coach led me through the following exercise.



She asked me to export my LinkedIn connections to a spreadsheet and organize it alphabetically. Once I had this big list, then I was to review each and every connection, assigning it a letter A, B, or C. These letters were categories that represented how well I knew each connection and the

value of the overall relationship, with “A” being the strongest and “C” being the weakest. Once that was complete, she then asked me to begin with the “A” group and reach out to them – with a phone call where I could, or at least an email. The purpose was simply to reconnect with that person. As I went through my “A” group over the following weeks, a surprising thing happened. I not only re-established a sense of connection with my LinkedIn network, we also uncovered opportunities to help one another. I specifically remember one speaking engagement for a professional organization that came from doing this exercise. That single engagement has led to a great long-term relationship with the organization and it opened up additional corporate speaking engagements. I now try to do this exercise once a quarter and work through my “A” and “B” connections.

**33. Develop strategic alliances.** No one ever succeeds alone, and I believe the most successful of us build strong strategic alliances. I define strategic alliances as deeper relationships (think inner circle of your network), where you are regularly interacting with one another for the specific purposes of making introductions, referring business, or

partnering on projects. There is a structure to this relationship that helps propel you both toward your goals with better results, and in less time.

If you're an entrepreneur, examples of this might be partnerships with other individuals/companies who offer complimentary services or have a specific skill needed for a client engagement. If you're in a corporate position, examples of strategic alliances may be a relationship with a particular vendor who offers exceptional service and is your "go to" resource, a small group of peers who regularly share ideas, or a sponsor helping open doors to bigger opportunities for you.

A quick example of how I make this work: Impact Instruction Group's primary lines of business are custom training and development and leadership development for emerging women leaders. I have a strategic alliance with The Change Collaborative, an organization led by my good friend and colleague Deb Peluso. Be sure to check them out at [www.thechange collaborative.com](http://www.thechange collaborative.com).

Their area of expertise is in organizational design and change management. We work with similar types of clients, and our offerings complement one another – so it's a natural fit. Deb and I sit down together once a quarter and we look for ways to help one another – whether that's through introductions, specific projects, sharing best practices, or sometimes commiserating! It's truly a win-win alliance because together, we're better able to help one another and our clients succeed. I know there are people like Deb in your list of connections, so take the time to connect with them and figure out how you can more strategically help one another.

Another quick tip: it can take time to find the right fit for a strategic alliance, so be open to the process. This also works best when you have a small number of alliances, because they take considerable time and effort to maintain – I'd recommend no more than 2-3 at any given time.

**34. Learn the Art of the Ask.** It's true that when you need a relationship it's too late to build one (see #7). But one shortfall I see so often is when we do have a strong relationship, that we're afraid to ask for whatever we need. In my experience, I've seen this as a bigger issue for women than men, and it comes down to working through fears of rejection, of appearing to be pushy, or the fear of being seen as "taking advantage" of another person. When you have a strong relationship with someone, and you have truly added value to that other person, it's completely OK and expected that from time to time

you'll ask for something you need. This is learning the art of the ask and it's vital to your success. You'll notice that most of these tips I've shared is about asking in some way, shape, or form. Whether that's asking for advice, asking for an introduction, asking to form a strategic alliance. The magic is combining "the ask" with always making sure you're providing value first, plus being sincere and consistent in your efforts to build relationships with others.

I'll share an example: I recently published a workbook of exercises to help emerging women leaders develop key strategic skills. A friend and colleague, Beth Thomas, had some fantastic tips that I knew would be perfect for a section of the workbook. (Be sure to check out her work – she's an expert on creating happiness in the workplace. Her recent book is available on Amazon, *Powered by Happy: How to Get Happy and Stay Happy at Work.*) I simply asked her if I could publish her tips in my workbook with credit and a reference to her work. She was more than happy to oblige, and thanked me for asking her. It's a win-win for both of us.



But there are also times when we want to ask something of someone we don't know, or someone we don't have a strong relationship with. This is probably the situation that brings up the most fear for people and one of the biggest ways I see people hold themselves back when it comes to strategic relationship building. My strategic alliance with Dr. Lois

Frankel is a perfect example of the art of the ask when you don't know the other person.

I began building the women's leadership practice of Impact Instruction in 2009. As is the pattern you've probably recognized by now, it really began with a good friend and colleague Tonya Tiggett. (Her company, Speak our Language, is the go-to place for becoming conversant and fluent in Spanish. They offer an array of corporate, individual, and children's programming. I learned how to hold a conversation in 8 weeks, and I didn't even study Spanish in high school! Visit them at [www.speakourlanguage.com](http://www.speakourlanguage.com)).

Tonya was the motivator for me to build a course around the book *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*, by Lois Frankel, Ph.D. I delivered it to a women's leadership group

within the organization she worked for at the time, and its success encouraged me to think about the possibilities of expanding further into women's leadership work.

I now had a choice. On one hand, I could have just had that one-time success and never touched this work again. On the other hand I knew I had something that emerging women leaders needed and I couldn't ignore. I could be courageous and make the ask of an international best-selling author to collaborate on programming. Whew . . . a little daunting! I decided to think big and set any fears aside. That led me to the decision to reach out to Dr. Frankel and ask her if we could explore ways to work together. As it turns out, she was more than gracious and open to the possibility, and today I bring leadership programs based on two of her books to companies and professional organizations across the country. I'll add that part of the proceeds for this work go to her foundation, Bloom Again ([www.bloomagain.org](http://www.bloomagain.org)), so again there's that win-win.

This outcome really changed my life, and hopefully the lives of the emerging women leaders I get the opportunity to work with. It never would have happened without a strong relationship with Tonya, or the courage to "make the ask" of an influential person I didn't know. I encourage you to look at where some of these possibilities may be in your network.

- 35. Be approachable. Be open to the possibilities.** This mindset and way of being will predict how successful you are – when you're open to possibilities, when you're approachable – you will attract successful people to you. Will every relationship and every opportunity work out? No, and that's the way it should be. The right ones will bubble to the surface when you adopt this mindset and apply the tips from this ebook. Be that person who others want to be around, and you'll enjoy the true success that comes with rewarding relationships.



## About Impact Instruction Group



Founded in 2007 by Amy Franko, Impact Instruction Group is a leading corporate training and development firm. Ms. Franko is an award-winning training designer, receiving a 2010 APEX Award of Excellence. She is also one of a select few authorized by internationally recognized author Lois Frankel, Ph.D. (of *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* fame) to create and deliver programs specific to her best-selling books.

Ms. Franko is a member of American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), where she leads the Learning Executives Network. She is also a member of Women for Economic and Leadership Development (WELD), where she currently serves as the 2012 Chairperson for the Women's Executive Series.

Impact Instruction Group's multi-faceted business units include:

- [Corporate Learning and Development](#)
- [Emerging Women Leaders](#)
- [Keynote Speaking](#)
- [ELCircle](#)

Impact Instruction Group designs programs to empower companies and leaders through custom learning experiences for business impact. The group also works with organizations to develop leadership training programs and professional development strategies for emerging women leaders. In 2010, the firm won the Apex Award of Excellence for training design. In addition, Amy Franko is one of a select few authorized by author Lois Frankel (of *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* fame) to create and deliver programs specific to her best-selling books.

### How to Contact Us

To learn more about custom corporate training and development services, professional development programs designed for emerging women leaders, or to book Amy Franko for an event, contact Sarah Steele: [sarah.steele@impactinstruction.com](mailto:sarah.steele@impactinstruction.com)