



| David Staughton

MAKING CONNECTIONS COUNT

WORKING WITH ALLIANCES TO GET MORE LEADS

Finding your potential alliance partners
Tips for how to get leads early in a relationship
Working with your alliance partners to get great leads

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Chapter 1

Where Are You Now?

What's going on in the world right now? Australia, like many other countries, is home to a very competitive marketplace. And most people have one of two opportunities—if the market is going well, it's a chance to make money or if the market is doing poorly, it's a chance to invest and focus on the market share. So either you work to dominate your market, or you lay low and grow your market share so that it propels you up when the economic upswing comes. Either way, the marketplace does what it does, and with the right attitude and strategy you can overcome pretty much any such condition.

One growing trend, however, is busyness. And that in and of itself can be a very good thing, or not such a good thing; lots of people become really, really busy, and they work particularly hard... but they don't get many results. So it's really about focusing on a few, selective, correct things, and getting to be particularly effective at them.

“The way of the world is meeting people through other people.”

–Robert Kerrigan



In today's world, success in any arena of life is closely interwoven with the web-work of connections—social connections, networks, business alliances, or however you choose to term them—and networking has become the key ingredient in the recipe for achievement. The necessity is in finding alliance prospects and partners, who will in turn guarantee that your business grows beyond your hometown and even your former realisation.

Think of your connections like a spiderweb that you weave; one where you are in the center and can roam freely about, touching base with all the ends. You start out small of course, one step, one spooling thread, one silken strand at a time. In time, your connections grow, and your web manifests. It's up to you to be diligent, to keep all bases connected, to reinforce the threads that need strengthening, and to keep your web intact.

Where are you now?

➤ The Rollercoaster Ride of Busyness

It's the typical story of many start-up professionals. Initially, the worry is: *I'm not busy enough. I need to do lots of marketing and talk to all my referrals and get in touch with everyone and everything that's happening...* which eventually morphs to: *I'm pretty busy these days, can't complain, it's fantastic...* and spikes up to the point of: *I'm getting way too busy, and I'm so stressed out! I'm too busy harvesting the seeds, and don't even have time to reap what I sow! I forgot to do my marketing, I forgot to thank my referrals, I forgot to feed the dog...* at which point you force yourself to slow down and slope down, and business inevitably drops back to "busy" or even "quiet" mode.

The Three Levels of Business Activity:

- **Quiet Mode** (Business is... nonexistent.)
- **Busy Mode** (Business is good!)
- **Overwhelmed Mode** (Business has swallowed up my life.)

After a while, you begin to learn how to steer, how to buckle up for the highs and the dives, and how to keep running smoothly at all points of the journey. You realise that the game is about working smarter, not just harder. Because you've begun to realise the universal truth: *How hard you work and how much you make are not always related.*

So how do you get to that point of success? In today's world, you know that it's not just about what you know—it's also, to a very large extent, who you know! What's the point of selling your services if there's no one to sell them to? You have to spin a powerful web around you, a network of trust, communication, and connection that is strong enough to support yourself and your business.

"The feeling of being hurried is not usually the result of living a full life and having no time. It is on the contrary born of a vague fear that we are wasting our life. When we do not do the one thing we ought to do, we have no time for anything else—we are the busiest people in the world."

—Eric Hoffer

It's quite straightforward, actually. All you need to do is follow five steps—simple, effective, and typically overlooked. But get these down, and you'll see the results soon enough, with success that'll seem explosive in comparison to what you've accomplished prior. Just don't say I didn't warn you!

1. ***Get the basics right***
2. ***Get good—and get better***
3. ***Collect more data.*** Information contributes to knowledge; knowledge is power.
4. ***Build trust.*** You want to be known—famously, not infamously.
5. ***Keep in touch.*** Don't let that database go to waste!

Here we go...

Chapter 2

Step One: Get the Basics Right

➤ Know what you want

Who are you seeking? Have you given any thought to the sorts of people you're catering to? Who are your prospects, who are your potential clients, who are your desired alliances? Who are they now, and who would you like to attract?

Your prospects shouldn't be "everyone with a pulse." On the one hand, it'd be lovely to be able to attract everyone with a pulse, and sometimes the most unlikely folks may introduce you to some very appropriate people, but usually you have to direct yourself to a specific group. Everyone you come into contact with could be a potential client, referral, or alliance, but the game is all about stacking the odds in your favor. You have to know where you want to go in order to pick a direction at the crossroads; you have to know what you want, if you don't want to run the risk of coming out of the grocery store with too much or too little or nothing that you really needed.

"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

—Bill Cosby

That's why specialisation is so fundamental. In order to do an exceptional job and make a special name for yourself while running a successful business, you need to choose a niche.

➤ Specialise

Work at something you are good at, something you're passionate about, something you can connect over, whatever it is. You have to be knowledgeable about what you do (in-depth knowledge is not just attractive, it's essential!)—but you also have to be knowledgeable about who you interact with: your target market, your network of alliances, and your clients. The whole point is in successfully reaching out to these people and businesses that have relatable interests and needs; a market, that is, that you can

easily target and offer solutions to. Having no target audience or expecting anyone or everyone to do business with you is like throwing mud against the wall and hoping all of it will stick.

Make yourself an expert in your industry, your field, and your business. Radiate that you are highly qualified and professional. And especially if you're running a small start-up business with limited resources, you need to choose your battles wisely. Focus your efforts on a fairly narrow market to avoid head-on collisions with bigger competitors. Stick to what you do and know best; endeavor to become the best, the only one. Not literally, for there will and should be others (what'll they compare you to, after all?), but metaphorically: *the only one worth considering!*

➤ Focus

It's fundamental. And by focus, I'm referring to two dimensions of the definition.

First, you want to focus on specifics: from doing *anything* for *anyone* at *anyplace* at *any time* and at *any price*, you want to focus on *these things* for *these people* at *this location* and at *this time* for *this price* (or: from A.A.A.A.A to T.T.T.T.T)! So one major aspect of this is in choosing a niche. There are a myriad of options, situations, and groups to choose from, just a handful including:

- **Cultural niche:** *collecting and selling old, rare, and selective Italian music cassette tapes for the ethnic crowd in your nation's Little Italy.*
- **Sector niche:** *catering to the self-employed, freelancing crowd.*
- **Demographic niche:** *finding loans and mortgages just for baby boomers.*
- **Special interest niche:** *sports-wear for golfers, business books for investors.*
- **Product niche:** *it's all about the baby food.*

Not zoning in on a niche is crippling to your business, your quality, and even your clientele, since you're all over the place. In the beginning, you're keen to just get anything. Sometimes you do it for real cheap, or even for free. That's one strategy, and sometimes a necessity in the very beginning, but you want to have a strategy, and start to specialise as you become better and bigger and more well-known. Soon enough, you should be up to a certain skill set and you're the one who gets choosy. You choose your clients, your location, and your timing—and your price. You don't need to work at 3am, or on Sunday afternoon, or fifty miles up the coast, or for anything less than X dollars...

Chapter 2 Step One: Get the Basics Right

As your business grows, you must be more focused. And, perhaps ironically, the more you say no, the more money you can make.

That's what networking is about, anyway. In the beginning you'll take anybody, you'll scout out and network everywhere, and you might be up for anything. Over a period of time, however, your business begins to grow by repeats and referrals and the happiness, satisfaction, and goodwill of the customers who have had a great experience with you, because you've become so focused, specialized, and dedicated.

And thus, secondly, your focus should be customer-oriented and customer-driven. You should adopt an *excellence* in service attitude by being customer-centric. Lasting business connections are built upon an unwavering dedication to each client. This dedication includes you forming a personal mindset of comprehending each client's world and needs. Understanding your clients' requirements will provide you with the information and leverage you need to provide for them and to earn a loyal client base. Forget the numbers for now, and focus primarily on people. Don't work for the money or for expansion—work to provide your clients with exceptional service. Consciously work to improve the quality of their lives, be genuine and honest, and they will feel it. If they're the clients you want, they'll appreciate it, and you're well on your way to paving the road to customer retention with the number one road-making tool: *trust*.

FIND INDIVIDUALS RELEVANT TO YOUR GROWTH!



➤ Know what they want

What do your clients really want from you? What can you offer them, apart from whatever product and service you can give? No two people think alike, of course, but there are some universal patterns that can help make your life easier, and help you decide how to approach different types of people.

Here are four common categories:

- **The “Give Me” People:** these folks just want some peace of mind. They want you to provide them with that which makes them feel safe, comfortable, carefree, or whatever. Your job is to be proactive, to reduce their worry, and to be there in the long run.
- **The “Acknowledge Me” People:** they want you to make it personal. They need you to listen and remember them, to make them feel special and comfortable. Be prepared for long conversations and be ready with lots of positive feedback.
- **The “Help Me Trust You” People:** they value transparency, clarity, and straight-forwardness. No beating around the bush here. You need to be genuine, an expert, alert, accessible, honest, and clear.
- **The “Help Me Understand” People:** these people value your cooperation, but they also want to be aware of what’s going on. They want your partnership and your guidance; you’ll be embarking on an engaging journey. Be prepared to translate your world—replace the business or industry lingo and the buzzwords—and work on the art of simplification.

“The successful networkers I know, the ones receiving tons of referrals and feeling truly happy about themselves, continually put the other person’s needs ahead of their own.”

—Bob Burg

Chapter 3

The Power of Alliances

If you're doing it right, 1 + 1 can equal 3. And it can equal much, much more, too. One prospect can have a whole army of prospects at his back; to get them, your job is to just work on your alliances.

It's not just what you do, though; it's how you do it. Okay, you're building relationships—but what kind of relationships are you building? That's the real question, here. That's the real deal. How well you look after your alliances, how many you develop, how strong your bond is, and how often they give back to you all stems from how much effort you put into these relations.

"It's all about people. It's about networking and being nice to people and not burning any bridges."

—Mike Davidson

If you're finding that your alliances don't refer you or they're drifting off, chances are that you're not taking good care of them (or they're not the right kind of alliances for you... but more on that later)! Do you respect them, do the job right, and remember them? Do you treat them like people who simply exist to provide you with leads, or are you approaching them for a genuine partnership? Are you willing to invest time and energy into creating a cooperative, long-lasting operation? Your money, leads and success will flow from the place you've turned your attention to.

So the real question is: what can you do to treat your alliances right?

It depends. It depends on your own character, but primarily it depends on the character of the people whom you're dealing with. In these situations, there are two types of people: we'll call them *hunters* and *farmers*.

➤ The Two Main Types of Alliances

■ **Hunters.** These are the sorts of people who want results fast (yesterday is a good deadline). They want to run out and shoot down the prize immediately. They cultivate more relationships, but these are short-term and shallower. They value quantity over quality. They deal well with deadlines and rapid-fire deals, like to trade deals and favors, and tend to get more urgent and difficult leads.

- **Real estate agents**
- **Property dealers**
- **Salespeople**
- **Speakers and motivators**
- **Life coaches**
- **Car dealers**

■ **Farmers.** These are the types who believe that good things take time. They invest in fewer but higher-quality relationships, watering pruning, and nurturing them faithfully and meticulously. Their connections are for the long run and are thus deeper; they value quality over quantity. They need to take time and build trust before agreeing to anything, and they don't like being rushed. They're loyal, but harder to get on your side.

- **Accountants**
- **Solicitors**
- **Financial planners**
- **Architects and valuers**
- **Builders**

➤ In Matters of Style...

What's the best to be? Do you need leads or partnerships? You have to decide: are you going to be more of a hunter? Or are you going to be more of a farmer? If you're in the start-up phase of your business and you have to eat today, you probably don't have time to wait for crops to grow. You need to go out and hunt *now*. So hunting is likely going to be a necessary way of life in the beginning.

"In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

—Thomas Jefferson

For those of you who have been in the game for a while—a few months or a few years, depending on how well your business is doing and what the overall situation is—you may want to focus more on a farming strategy. It's a seasonal pattern and process—watering, harvesting, and weeding: that is, choosing, cultivating, critiquing, eliminating, or preserving your connections accordingly.

As aforementioned, however, it also depends on the person who you're dealing with. If you're dealing with motivational speakers or property developers or real estate agents, you'll probably want to match their rapid-fire style and fast dealing-and-wheeling. If you're working with accountants, financial planners, or architects, you know that you need to slow down and build a lot more rapport; these people are like dates: they promise you the world, but they're also judging you all the while (*Are you trustworthy? Can I trust you? Should I? Would I enjoy and benefit from being involved with you?*).

Note, of course, everyone is individually different, and personalities must be taken into account first. Still, it helps to be at least a bit prepared when approaching a certain industry or field, so you know what to typically expect.

When you establish alliances, you build bonds depending on styles and preferences, always trying to build on commonalities. Focus on people you like, people who are like you, people who “get” you, people whom you “get”; your chances of then being seen as *likeable* increase, as does your own personal enjoyment in doing business with these people!

Whatever the situation, be sure to pace yourself accordingly: do you need to speak or behave slower or faster? Should you focus on facts or feelings? What common interests can you build on? Is your relationship solely professional or can it also be more personal?

➤ Seeking and Identifying New Alliances

Starting out? Excellent. Do something every day to get the word out about your activities and what you have to offer. Getting known in your local community is a perfect stepping stone to launching off from the ground and later accelerating the growth of your business. You're on familiar turf, you've already some sort of reputation with many people, and you understand the community mindset better. You're also much more accessible to the people surrounding you. Start with your friends and family; word of mouth is the way to go!

“It isn't just what you know, and it isn't just who you know. It's actually who you know, who knows you, and what you do for a living.”

—Bob Burg

A few tips to help you get the word out locally:

- **Carry your business cards** with you everywhere. Yes, everywhere includes the local property club, service club, or investment club. Just in case you do strike up a conversation with a potential business prospect—and why not?—you won’t be caught off-guard and you’ll have your handy business card, well, handy.
- **Strive to learn about your community** and see how you can assist. Give in order to receive. Starting your own local project is a great way to get known. Host an event, help the homeless, start a charity run, organize a walk-a-thon for a cause. Your reputation and familiarity gets a boost, and people will see that you’re committed to the well-being of the community!
- **Join business clubs and attend** luncheons, dinners, happy hours, and any other such events where you can get to know more like-minded people.
- **Network everywhere.** Retirement homes, schools, religious meetings, fitness centers, sporting functions... the list is endless.
- **Take advantage of your hobbies.** Love photography? Why not make free postcards with your contact info on the back? Hand them out like business cards, and be lauded for your creativity and originality.

Apart from your local groups, branch out with other community groups too, online. Don’t forget that in our modern society, “word of mouth” is often substituted by “word of web”.

How else can you find prospects and alliances? Here’s one technique for filling your niche once you’ve established it. Once you explain to people about what you specialize in, you can ask, “Do you know anybody else in this field?” or “Do you know anybody who could use my services?” The handful of clients or friends who are really close to you will seriously try to help you out and introduce you to people like you; this is what’s called a *third party introduction*. It’s got the ease and comfort and support of a middleman—like a wingman who helps to set the two of you up—and it’s easier to connect with strangers due to your client or friend who already has earned the respect and trust of those other people who don’t yet really know you.



Identifying potential alliances is equally as important as identifying potential clients. Alliances are the fuel that feeds the success of your business. Find people with a similar target market and with similar interests. In identifying your target market of alliances, project similar recommendations that you would be looking for in a business. That is, what can *you* do for *them*? You must offer to give before you can receive. Once you find out what you can do for them, and deliver, they will do the same! You're well on the way to a long-lasting business relationship—provided that you continue to nurture it and continue to anticipate your alliances' needs.

➤ Meeting New Alliances

Whoever you're aiming to find or meet, be sure to try and understand their business world first. Before meeting with a prospective client or alliance, do your homework! Research their business and them; visit their website, social platform, LinkedIn profile, and whatever else they have available. If possible, ask others' opinions and see what people think of them. The more you know about them, the easier it'll be to partner with them (and to decide if you really do want to do so!).

"Most business decisions occur over lunch and dinner than at any other time, yet no MBA courses are given on the subject."

—Peter Drucker

Some key things you want to look for are the products and services they are providing. Who does the target market appear to be? How are these alliances or prospects treating their own customers or other alliances? What benefits will you have by this collaboration; what might you have to look out for or be sensitive about?

Be prepared.

Chapter 4

Step Two: Get Good— and Get Better

Getting good—really, really good—especially when dealing with first-time clients, is essential for the long-term success of your business. Your main goal is to obtain client retention in order to continue generating profits; your avenue to doing so is by having a clear vision of how you can benefit your clients, and working towards that goal.

Providing a quality of work that doesn't merely meet—but *supersedes*—the expectations of your clients is an indispensable ingredient in building lasting business connections that will bring continuous flowing profits, industry respect, and devoted customers.

► Be Effective

No matter how good you are, there's always room for improvement. There are always ways of being more efficient, more effective, more energized.

“There's always room for improvement, you know—it's the biggest room in the house.”

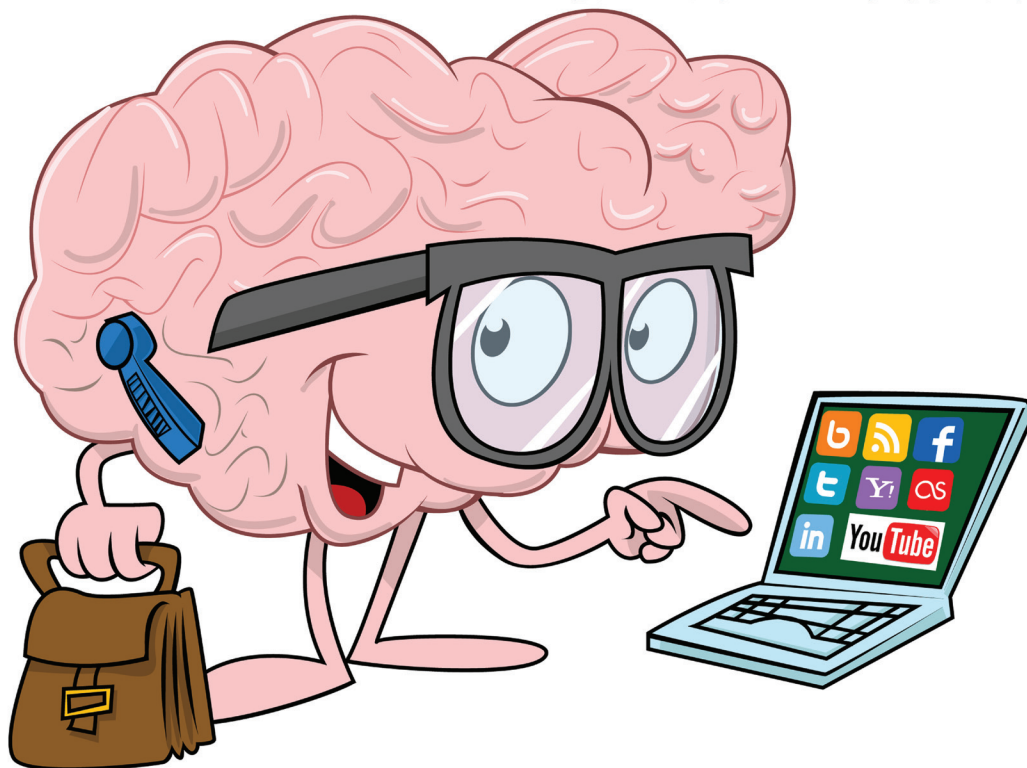
—Louise Heath Leber

Here are just a few tips you could use as a starting point:

- **Business cards.** Inexpensive, but vital business tools. These should contain your business name, your own name and title, a brief note of what you do, and a recent photo of yourself or an attractive and telling company logo. Be mindful of your audience; gray or non-contrasting colors are more difficult to read, and you want your most important info—your contact info—to be in big, bold letters. Simple, clean, and professionally designed. You can give these away anytime, anyplace; an ice-breaker, a finishing touch, and a mini-resume!

- **Website.** In an age of technological evolution, you've got to be technologically savvy. A clean and appealing website is a must. Make a strong impact with the image of your business, and offer it as the perfect platform for your potential clients and alliances to obtain more information about your work, goals, and objectives.
- **Blogs,** and any other publications—digital or paper. Write constantly, intelligently, and about things you're familiar with and passionate about. Give your prospects another avenue through which they can connect, follow, and get to know you.
- **Email signatures.** So simple, and sadly often overlooked. The best little reminders, and so effortless. Just make sure it's professional, easy to digest, and informative so as to affect the tone of every communication you make via email.
- **Emails.** Do you send personal emails to prospective alliances? It's a very good idea. Don't just make it all about business; you're a real person too, and real people are often more relatable than intangible people who hide behind their businesses. Keep it simple and friendly; wish them a Happy New Year, a good weekend, or ask them about their families or travels or something you've got in common and have bonded over before.
- **Postcards** are also lovely; like personal emails, these are short messages that can go a long way. Same goes for **thank you cards and gifts**, of course.
- **Professional photo.** If you can't be somewhere in person, it's usually a good idea to forward your photograph, at least. You should have it on your website, business cards, fliers, and social networking sites. Potential clients and alliances will form an initial impression of you just by looking at your photo (and analyzing your biographical info). Ensure that your photograph is professional and friendly!
- **Social networks.** LinkedIn is a professional network that is rich in professional prospects. Use it as another channel to promote your business and to establish relationships. You can also stay abreast of things via Twitter, Facebook, and other such social platforms.
- **Showing up.** Whether you're just visiting an alliance or networking at a big event, it's important to network in person, too.

WORK SMART !



► Be Impressive

First impressions count... and linger. Projecting a professional image is a necessity for professional success. In today's diverse business environment, more than ever, the steps you take are constantly being monitored by your clients and prospects. You must manage your own professional image in order to enable those around you to view you in a positive light. Your choices in style, mannerism, appearance, and behavior are all indicative—consciously or not—of your competence, character, commitment, and mindset.

It isn't bias, per say; it's just the way the human mind works. It's an innate sense of judgment within each of us, things we pick up—clues—as to whether we like or feel we could trust a person or enjoy his or her company (or lack thereof). The way you dress, the type of car you drive and the care you give it, the state of your desk, even the tweak of your tie or the shape of your hair—all of this counts; the way you present yourself sends a message about you, your skills, and your company. Keep abreast of acceptable trends and international standards so that you're sending out the right message at all times.

“Position yourself as the center of influence—the one who knows the movers and shakers. People will respond to that, and you’ll soon become what you project.”

—Bob Burg

Let’s break this down into three elements: the presentation of your business (brand), the presentation of your relationship (connection kit), and the presentation of yourself (especially first impressions).

- **Branding.** Your brand is the image of your business. The better your branding, the more effective your advertising.
- **Connection Kit.** How do you connect with people? How do you find them? How do you keep in touch? Business cards, email signatures, DL flyers, collateral kits, car signage, local PRs, websites, YouTube testimonial videos, social network profiles, and sponsorships are just a handful of ideas.
- **First Impressions.** First impressions are crucial—you already know this. First impressions also include first words, though, and it’s important to practice what you have to say *before* you’re put on the spot. (You’re less likely to blank out, for one thing...)

The “elevator pitch” used to be a popular term for “introduction”—supposedly, if you accidentally meet your dream alliance in an elevator, you only have a matter of seconds to hook him or her with a swift and appealing summary of yourself and your business. Just remember:

- **Keep it simple** and to the point. You’ve got mere seconds!
- **Use clear language;** steer clear of technical jargon. You can impress with the lingo later.
- **Use powerful, strong, emotionally compelling words** to make your statement appealing and visual.
- **Be calm and friendly;** don’t seem desperate, even if you are.
- **Include a short success story** to illuminate what you do.
- **Include your goal or mission;** is your point to sell a product, get an alliance, or something else?
- **Include a hook** to snag your listener’s interest and get him or her thinking about you later.

First words count even more on the phone, a scenario where there's no body language from which to get extra cues. If you're not in the zone, don't pick up the phone. Negativity—like positivity—is contagious, and you don't want to permanently lose a prospect just because you're having a lousy moment!

A very effective technique is to begin a phone call with: *Thanks for calling ABC Business, this is Dave!*

What's so special about that? Well, it ends with a name. Not, *This is Dave speaking*. Not even, *This is Dave, how may I help you?* Just *This is Dave*. It gives off a fabulous impression: you've gifted someone with the knowledge of your name, and they will most likely open up and confess their own name. On a first-name basis, you're going to have a much better phone conversation.

But most important of all: your tone. Did you know that your smile can be heard from the other end of the line? Your personality flows through the phone as fast as your words fly. People will pick up your mood and your character right away, and that first impression affects the entire conversation—possibly, the entire relationship.

► Network Smarter

Effective businesses know how to effectively network. Networking doesn't just mean showing up to events, shaking lots of hands, and slapping down some business cards here and there. Networking involves leveraging your business and personal contacts so that you obtain more profitable opportunities.

“Technology does not run an enterprise, relationships do.”

—Patricia Fripp

- **Keep your networking strategic, focused, and disciplined.** Showering people with business cards or bombarding everyone with emails could backfire. You want to inform, not annoy. Concentrate on finding individuals who are relevant to the growth of your business. Don't waste time!
- **Become a familiar face** by frequenting various meeting places. Don't leave networking to chance; instead, be organized, pencil events into your calendar in advance, and seek out places where you can meet influential people. Single out groups that meet regularly.

- **Be helpful and friendly.** Business relationships are like friendships in that they thrive if they're genuine and mutually respectful, giving, and appreciative. Develop an interest in what your prospects and connections are involved in, and provide friendly input when appropriate. Remember to be patient, especially if you're looking to cultivate a long-term and meaningful relationship.
- **Practice good etiquette.** Arrive early or at least on time, and stay for the entire meeting whenever you can. Contribute to the discussion where appropriate, be attentive, and mind your manners.
- **Be creative.** Shake it up a bit; do something different every so often. You might want to venture beyond your industry to connect with folks across the board, or travel to attend relevant conferences and expos elsewhere.
- **Keep in touch...**

So you know that you have to make yourself an expert in your field. But not just an expert. You've got to become a *very likable expert*.

And that you are. Just show it off!

Chapter 5

Step Three: Collect More Data

► Taking N.A.M.E.S.

It's not enough to simply acquire connections. You have to actually do something about them! What does it matter that you just purchased a flock of a hundred magnificent sheep if you don't take care of them and let them wither away and die of cold or hunger? Gather your information, and nurture it by making regular use of it and catering to it.

Keep a record of all prospects', clients', and alliances' personal details and use this record regularly whenever you need to and should. It's essential, obviously, that you keep your data as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Don't fall into the temptation of investing so much time and effort into running your business that you fail to allocate time for collecting this data from these people who will help your business survive and thrive.

So what qualifies as "personal details"? Ideally, you need to have a database of the names, physical addresses, mobile/home/work phone numbers, email addresses, birthdays, hobbies, and organizations to which your clients belong in order to build rapport and trust off of this internal information you've got.

In a nutshell, your database should be filled with N.A.M.E.S.:

- **N**ame
- **A**ddress
- **M**obile/home/work phone numbers
- **E**mail
- **S**ocial connections

Establishing such a network of diverse people is essential for accelerating the growth of your business. You should use all the means within your reach—and you’ve got so many, if you look around and begin putting them to use—to build enduring and mutually beneficial relationships. This is the way to expand your sphere of influence in the business world.

Suggested tools:

- **Excel (spreadsheet)**, to build your database.
- **Cardscan (small scanner) or Cardmunch (iPhone app)**, for scanning the information off of business cards.
- **Google Alert**: set it up on each customer (name or company name), and you can immediately reconnect with something to offer: congrats, info about a new competitor, relative industry trends, etc.
- **LinkedIn Recommendations**: jump in and write one for your customer or alliance! You’ll strengthen your bond, establish their gratitude, and subtly introduce your business to readers.

➤ Branch Out to Collect More

It’s not just what you’re doing, but where. To be most effective, frequent the right kind of meeting places. Get out there, and talk to people. You don’t get recommendations for being a loner.

“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe,
call it a family: whatever you call it, whoever
you are, you need one.”

–Jane Howard

Stepping-stone list of organizations, contracts, and events:

- **Business Networking International (BNI)**. The largest networking organization in the world. You can become a local member and benefit from sharing ideas with other like-minded business people and contacts.
- **Chamber of Commerce**. An organization of businesses where the objective is to recognize, create, and/or act upon business opportunities!

- Local Business Association. This often consists of a local organization of small businesses with similar objectives to those of the Chamber of Commerce.
- SWAP. A derivative in which counterparties exchange cash flows of one party's financial instrument for those of another party's (i.e. IBM with the World Bank back in 1981); today, SWAPs are amongst the most heavily traded financial contracts worldwide.
- Council events
- Networking events in your area
- Clubs and societies
- Association events

Leverage the power of the Internet to target potential clients and alliances. Try out Google ads, Facebook ads, LinkedIn ads, Yahoo ads, and many more... You'll find the benefits as plentiful as the advertising opportunities; here's a handful:

- Inexpensively advertising to both prospects and clients
- Easily building your online reputation and credibility
- Enabling you to attract alliances that are already on the look-out for partners in business
- Easily reaching out to an international audience within your same industry; you have more choices when singling out the most committed alliances with whom you can collaborate.

► Collateral: What You Give is What You Get

To build faster and more trustworthy connections, you need to provide information about your own business on a regular basis. It's not just what you have on the table; most importantly, it's how you communicate about what you have on the table. Before you even make a connection with people, know that they've probably evaluated your business already through the channels you're using.

So how well are you projecting your information? How do you present collateral assets—your inventory, cash savings or deposits, or equipment? A prospective alliance will analyze the history and health of your business, your credit, your equity contributions, and any other general contributions or successes. If you pass that test, you've just cleared the first hurdle.

Tips to improve upon the presentation of your collateral:

- **Always keep a detailed record of the value of your assets.** Your prospective alliances might want to closely analyze the details before deciding to venture forth with you. Detailed records—and your own expertise concerning them—will help you avoid embarrassment from inquisitive potential partners.
- **Don't underestimate.** You're not overcomplicating things by maintaining good and detailed records. If anything, you're simplifying. You never know when this information will be necessary. And it's always good to keep yourself updating on these sorts of things, anyway.
- **Know your collateral assets.** Know the details; do your own homework before passing around your notes. You should know your business better than anyone else!

➤ Reaching Out to the Newbies

Alliances can also be fundamental in securing you prospects from amongst the new arrivals to your area. These new folks are ideal for providing you with additional business. You, of course, need to make an excellent impression and sound convincing in all your encounters with them. Don't hesitate with your marketing, and use constant promotions to lure them to you—mini posters, newspaper ads, emblazoning your vehicle, etc.

“The world is moving so fast these days that the one who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it.”

—Henry Emerson Fosdick

Great alliances for new arrivals (and sometimes these can be the new arrivals themselves):

- Real estate agents
- Immigration services
- Apartment or vehicle rentals
- Relocation and moving services

Chapter 6

Step Four: Build Trust

No matter if you're a hunter or a farmer, if you're slow or fast, if you're pressing for leads or for partnerships, you've got to hit this nail on the head every time: TRUST. Building a bridge of trust between your prospects, clients, referrals, and alliances is the most important part of the game. It takes time; like Rome, it's impossible to build the real thing in a day. But once it is erected, like Rome, it is spectacular in all its glory, and it takes quite some effort to knock it down.

Take the time to:

- **Know yourself.** Do you consider yourself a trustworthy person? If not, why should anyone else? Do you keep your promises? If you don't, people will lose faith in you fast.
- **Show confidence.** Feel confident about yourself, your appearance, the conversation you're having; all this shows, and it will impact the level of respect and trust that the other person showers on you in turn. When you don't show confidence, how can you expect someone else to have confidence in you?
- **Be aware of what you can do and have done.** Don't give false hopes. Offer success stories, case studies, real examples, and promises that you can deliver on.
- **Boost your credibility.** You can do this by sending samples or offers to your clients to promote your business, so that they can give you referrals based on their recommendations. Stay true to your word and follow through on issues or concerns as they arise. Above all, be honest.
- **Do what you say.** Since people prefer to do business with those whom they know, like, and trust, you need to ensure that your words and your actions are perfectly aligned. If you're not delivering on your promises or following through with your own ideas, how do expect others to follow you?

Prospects need a reason to believe in you and your business—otherwise, why would they even think of developing a connection with you? Trust is what drives risk, what propels you through a door of opportunity, what results in generating additional leads. Especially in today's world of information overload, people can easily get overwhelmed, frustrated, and confused. Quite simply, buyers rely on trusted advisors.

“When people honor each other, there is a trust established that leads to synergy, interdependence, and deep respect. Both parties make decisions and choices based on what is right, what is best, what is valued most highly.”

—Blaine Lee

Keys to build trust more quickly and more effectively:

- **Make a good first impression.** Remember to always dress professionally, speak clearly, be a good listener, and offer the person your full appreciation and attention.
- **Develop rapid rapport.** Rapport is your foundation, so make sure you keep it alive, effective, and positive.
- **Consider collaboration** with other businesses or alliances for possible client swaps. These are good leads, and folks are likely to trust mutual friends or clients much faster than they'd trust strangers. **If you're cooperating with another alliance:**
 - Choose one that complements your business and shares your target market (or a similar one);
 - Share the same values (in customer service and customer type);
 - Maintain effective and regular communication;
 - Use shared events as a chance to advertise and network for the both of you;
 - Help each other with endorsement letters and testimonials where appropriate;
 - Collaborate on a good newsletter or other publication to entice your target prospects; and
 - Keep marketing—even if you're “too busy.” Stay updated, or hire someone else to do that if you have to. Just don't stop; you'll suffer in the long run (if not sooner).

- **Use professional testimonials.** That's fodder ground for consensus building. Testimonials support your credibility, reputation, and level of expertise. They're invaluable in demonstrating the faith and appreciation that others have concerning you and your business.

In the case of trust, you have to be a farmer. If trust is a beanstalk, you need to water it and fertilize it devotedly before it gets strong enough and big enough for you to climb upon it to begin your search for the golden eggs.

The Relationship Beanstalk:

- **B**enefits for everyone!
- **E**xperience is obtained
- **A**dded value
- **N**etwork is expanded
- **S**end sample referrals and help; *your prospects must:*
- **T**rust you
- **A**ware of your achievements and abilities
- **L**ike you
- **K**now you



➤ Build Quality: The Three R's of Quality Service

- **Reliability.** Do you deliver on your promises? Do you meet agreed-upon timelines and deadlines?
- **Responsiveness.** Are you timely and efficient? Do you update your clients, prospects, and alliances? Do you keep up regular contact, and are you there for them when they need you most?
- **Real understanding.** Do you understand what your client needs and wants? Do you understand your industry? Do you have in-depth, first-hand expertise concerning your own business?

➤ To Receive, You First Must Give

When all's said and done, it just comes down to this: the success of your business lies within your ability to make connections. All successful businesses—not flukes, but grounded and tested successes—have mastered the art of communication, rapport, and relationship building. Don't get caught up in the everyday procedural “busyness” of your business. Working with alliances—especially alliances you *like*—is fundamental.

“Networking with integrity creates a greater willingness of all parties to be part of a human conduit to serve as energy and resource to one another. Sometimes you will give more than you receive and sometimes you will get back more than you give. It's not about keeping score.”

—Chris London

It takes two to keep any relationship afloat, and this is certainly true in business. So do your part. Go above and beyond. You have to put effort into the relationships if you want to engage in business with these people. Maintain contact. Work with them through challenging times and tight deadlines. Give, share, and support—never merely take. Maintaining professional relations with everyone—from clients to competitors—enables you to share struggles, resources, and industry practices that can propel your business to higher heights.

► Build Your Buyer Convincer Strategy

It isn't enough to get your feet through the door; you've got to make sure that you're not shoved right back out. Once you've created a relationship successfully, how do you go about maintaining it?

Cultivation. Yup, put that farmer hat back on.

Just because your clients or alliances sometimes require your services or are compelled to make a purchase later, it doesn't mean that you've got a partnership that you can take for granted. You must never stop convincing them to remain loyal. That's the key to earning repetitive visits from them.

Remember that trust takes times to build. Repeated purchases, repeated questions, and repeated trials are all normal. Some folks need to only purchase something from you once in order to stick with you; others have to be persuaded again and again, especially in the face of fierce competition. You need to ensure that they return to you—not because there's no other alternative, but because you make those alternatives pale in comparison. Your mission is to provide for your clients: to provide quality business and pair that with outstanding customer service.

When customers feel loved, when they're well treated with honesty, professionalism and respect, they'll feel a solid connection with you and your business. People never return if they were treated badly or if they received a bad impression. On the other hand, creating the perfect atmosphere while providing the perfect solutions is paramount to keeping you foremost on their minds.

Chapter 7

Step Five: Keep in Touch

For connections to count, they have to actually exist. And they'll only exist if you maintain constant contact with your clients. If you're not communicating with them regularly, you're widening the gap between you—the longer it's left alone, the wider it gets, and the more difficult it is to cross the distance a second time. Sometimes, it's impossible.

"The richest people in the world look for and build networks; everyone else looks for work."

—Robert Kiyosaki

Even if you want to drive your business to new heights, you mustn't only chase after new relationships, but also maintain current ones. Keep every channel of communication open; in an emergency situation, they might be compelled to get in touch with a persistent competitor... and might not look back. Do your best to make yourself accessible; don't provide your clients or alliances with opportunities to replace you.

Some great techniques for keeping in touch:

- **Phone calls.** Call and ask how your clients, alliances, and prospects are faring. Health, family, work, travels? Do they need any service from you? For instance, call to wish them well on a holiday or on their birthdays, and just tack on a friendly inquiry to see if they need your assistance (and assure them that you're there for them if/whenever they do).
- **Personalized emails.** Bulk emails are sometimes necessary, but personalized emails are always a nice touch. Customers feel special and respected given more personalized treatment. Consequently, they're likely to feel loved and will loyally stick with you.
- **Send e-news.** It's a great way to keep your client base updated about your business. Send these at regular intervals; don't neglect and don't bombard. Lack of professional consistency may indicate neglect or laziness.

- **Remember special occasions.** Holidays, birthdays, company anniversaries... all excellent excuses to keep in touch, and always happy occasions to connect over.
- **Send an annual report.** Clients will feel like they're a part of your business' success. They'll also appreciate your honesty and straightforwardness, and will be more comfortable dealing with you if they get to familiarise themselves with some of the overall business operations.
- **Thank you notes.** Gratitude is severely underrated yet its importance cannot be emphasized enough. What gets rewarded, gets repeated. And apart from that, being nice goes a long way. Even the tiniest note—*we appreciate doing business with you and look forward to doing business again in the future*—helps your customers know that you care about them and value their cooperation. They, in turn, will value you more as well.
- **Outsource.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Delegate! It's not easy to maintain constant contact with everyone. To avoid the headache (and, sometimes, the impossibility), consider sharing these duties with others.

➤ Rewarding All Referrals

Referrals are a spectacular way of getting known through relatively little effort on your own part. When you get referred, reward any referral and the client who made the referral (whether it's a good one or not). This encourages your client to keep referring potential customers to you and possibly stacking up great profitable leads for your business.

"There are two things people want more than sex and money—recognition and praise."

—Mary Kay Ash

Try to spot the customers who will probably become repeat customers. They're far more valuable than one-time shoppers who aren't interested in cooperation or loyalty. Repeat customers are the ones whom you want to cater to especially, the ones you want to keep bringing in, and the ones who will bring in even more wonderful customers. Remember, word of mouth and word of web are the greatest hits.

TURN ONE CONTACT INTO MANY !



Why reward your referrals:

- **What gets rewarded, gets repeated.** Giving incentives for any new business someone has brought you will definitely encourage him or her to bring even more leads.
- **Rewards increase your sales revenues.** If you are appreciative, people won't hesitate to bring in more leads if the chance crops up.
- **Rewards increase your clients' level of satisfaction.** Referrals who are rewarded are much more likely to spread the message and broadcast your business, increasing your reputation and credibility in the industry and market.

“You get what you reward. Be clear about what you want to get and systematically rewards it.”

–Bob Nelson

How to reward your referrals:

- **Send cards.** Online services like Moonpig.com or Sendacard.com let you send personalized cards to show your appreciation and your willingness to assist.
- **Send gifts.** Who doesn't like getting presents? They show that someone is thinking about you, right? So think about them. Show that you acknowledge your market's care and input. Send Lollypotz chocolate bouquets or send gift vouchers for their families and friends.
- **Host a friend referral shopping day.** Arrange a particular day of the week that's conducive to your clients, and broadcast a special day of shopping discounts for new customers so that they can share the news with friends and colleagues.
- **Create referral coupons.** Include these with invoices or billing statements that you send to your best customers. They'll ensure that the coupons get placed in good hands!

Finally, don't be afraid to ask. Ask for referrals! Good and helpful people are happy to help out other good and helpful people. If you don't ask, the answer will always be no...

“If I had to do it all over again, rather than build an old style type of business, I would have started building a network marketing business...”

–Robert Kiyosaki



David Staughton

AUTHOR | SPEAKER | CONSULTANT

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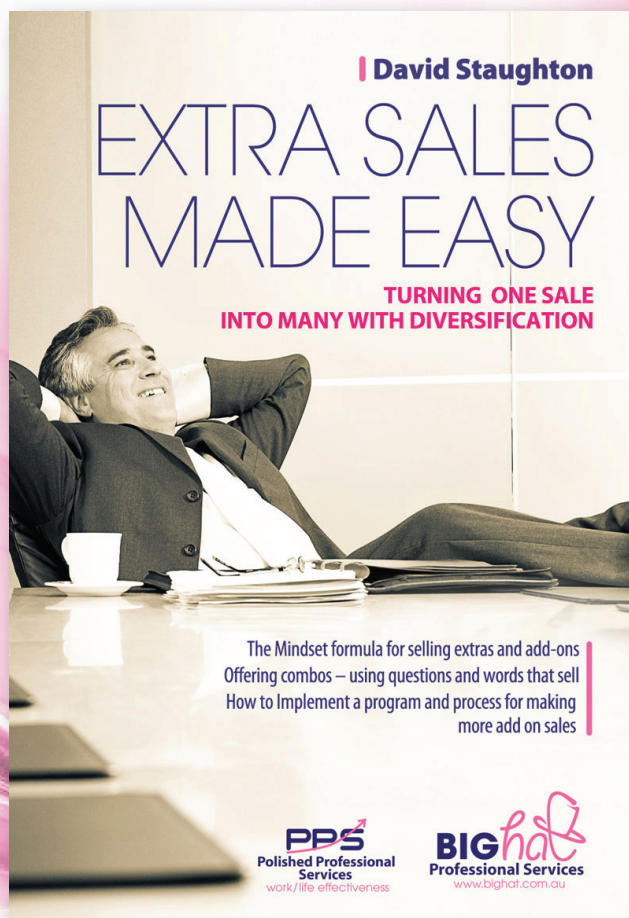
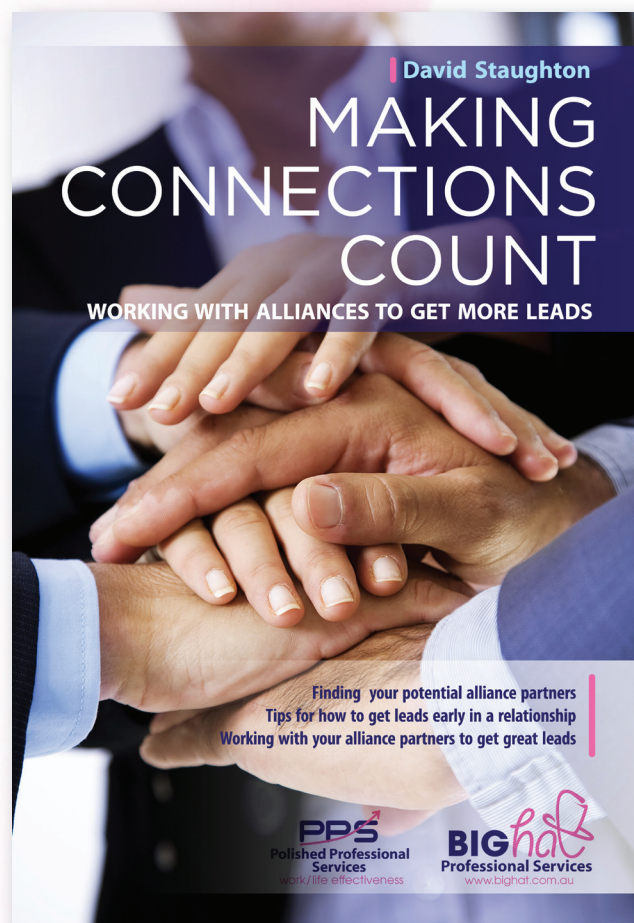
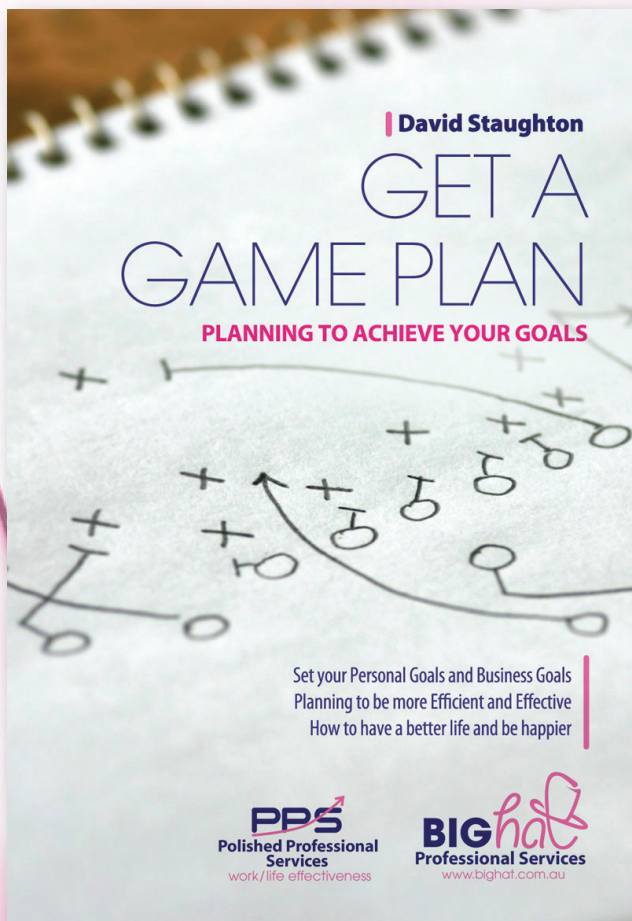
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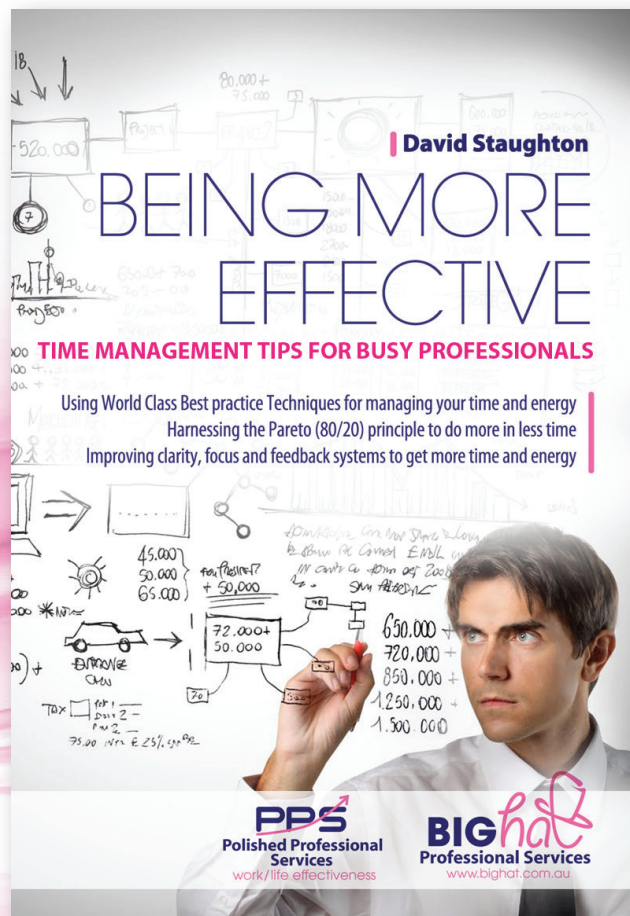
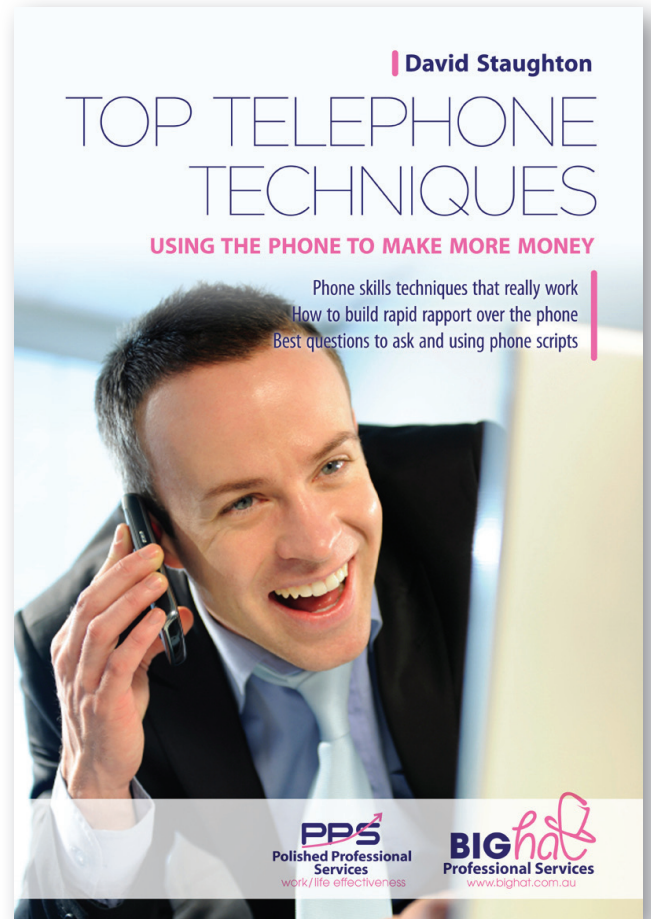
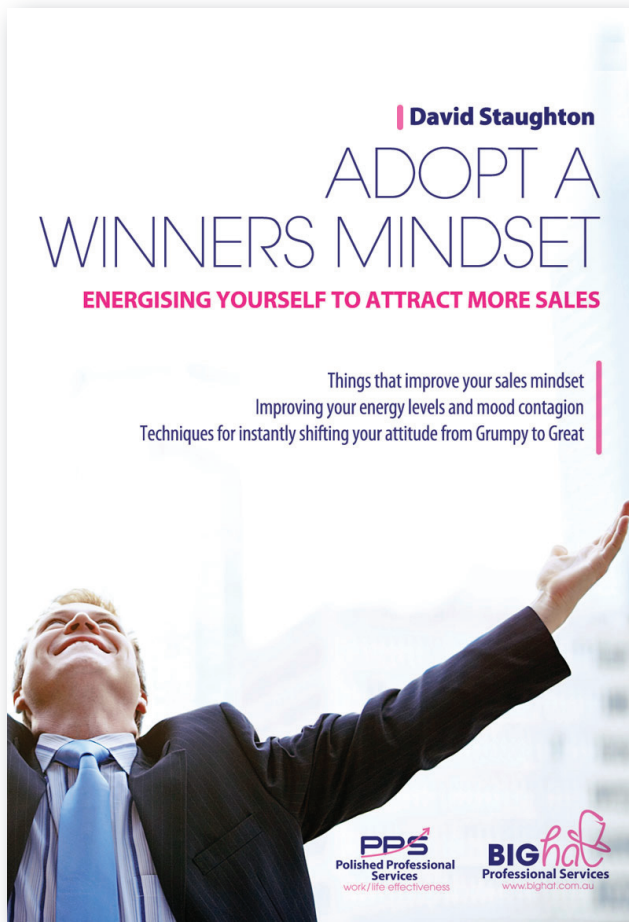
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www.davidstaughton.com
Telephone: +61 3 9525 8515
Mobile: +61 408 375 100