



DEVIANT THINKING PODCAST

Episode 6 -
Networking -
How to shift your
mindset and build
your confidence.

Transcript

See show notes at: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/006

00:00 Welcome back to the Deviant Thinking podcast. I'm your host, Jennifer Thompson, and today and always we will explore career advice that breaks the rules. So today it is all about networking and how to shift your mindset and build your confidence around networking. Networking is a super important part of your career experience and really how you get ahead. The best CEOs, the best managers are well networked and they know that they can lean on their network to help them move ahead. They can leverage their network to help their peers and their direct reports under them and the people that they mentor to move ahead as well. So networking is just absolutely vital to our career development. So who should take the time and listen to today's podcast? Well, first of all, anyone who wants to grow their career because you cannot grow your career without a great network.

01:09 Also, anyone who is out there looking for a job today or you think it's something you'll be doing in the near future, get on your networking. Now, don't wait until that last minute and start upping your networking because that's when it doesn't feel good. So I'm addressing networking today because so often when I'm working with clients, when I use the word networking, you would think I used a dirty word. Most of them grown, most of them grumble. And most of them just tell me they hate networking. And you know what? I have a confession. I was totally there too. I really thought networking was a dirty word. And that comes from someone who's an introvert. So, I like my quiet time. I am not one who gets energized by running out to networking events every night of the week. I definitely have those friends and they are super excited to be out there.

02:09 They get their energy from great networking events, but it's not me and many of

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my clients, it's not them either or they find that they have other things that are important in their life, like their family and their friends and they don't want to quote unquote waste their time networking. So I really get the trepidation and that fear when I bring up the word networking. But let's talk about what networking really is and what it's not. So what networking is not, it is not getting out there at the last minute and asking for something. It is not a hustle. It is not something you do every once in a while. One of the reasons I find that many people tell me they don't networking don't like networking is they feel like a used car salesman. They feel like they're out there trying to get something from everyone they talk to and it feels slimy.

03:14 And I can see that perspective completely and totally. I think when I started networking, that's what I thought networking was as well. And networking is anything but taking from others. What is networking? Well, to me really great networking is a positive exchange of kindness and appreciation. Yeah, right. A little bit opposite than we think about traditional networking. You know, I think many people think of networking as a transaction and I guess if I describe it as an exchange of kindness and appreciation that a little bit as a transaction, but it's a transaction you'd love to give. So as I look at networking is that going back to my own experience, I'm not someone who loves to get out there and just network for the sake of networking, but I learned a ton through a really great book. Okay. Here I'm going on with the books again, I do love to read and I do love to find great information.

04:25 So a really great book on networking is never eat alone by Keith Ferrazzi. I avoided this book. Oh my God. It had to be for about seven years because I hated the title of it, right? Never eat alone. I was definitely the corporate employee who when it came to lunchtime, I was like, Oh my God, leave me alone. Let me go sit in the cafeteria by myself. Let me put a podcast in. Let me read a book. Let me do something. I need to recharge because I can't handle being around people all the time and the thought of giving up my lunch hour to sit and chatter with someone when I was just going to be exhausted from being around people all day. Oh my goodness. That that thought was just daunting. So I totally avoided that book for years and I want to share with you it was a big mistake because Keith Ferrazzi shares some really great insights on networking and that's where I really learned that networking is this exchange of kindness and appreciation.

05:34 Networking is something we can do every day. And while he is absolutely the over the top networker who is constantly networking with people, even if you don't want to take it to that level, there's some really practical advice there. One of the things that I've found really um, thought provoking and eye opening was this thought that your acquaintances are really important part of your network. So the difference between kind of the close colleagues and friends and acquaintances or you know, if you think about it as your close friends, family and colleagues are kind of that inner circle network and they are often your biggest cheerleaders. They often are your biggest support, but they also know you really, really well. And sometimes they can also be your biggest critics and they often know the same people you know, or they think they know what you need.

06:38 So that really close network will have super valuable. Don't, don't get me wrong, they're often kind of entwined in your life so they don't see a bigger picture. But this idea of acquaintances. So if you take that idea again of the ball and your family and friends are the center, the next ring on the outside are your acquaintances. So those are people you interact with. Um, you know, you've met maybe once more than once. You know, they're the people you may go to church with you, you may go to synagogue with, you may participate in an activity with, they might be the friends, um, uh, parents, they might be friends of friends. So that wider network, that is where the magic happens because when you look there, those folks, well while the your close acquaintances are kind of again entangled in that same network and ball that you have, that next tier, they have far reaching um, tentacles that can kind of reach out from there into all kinds of areas.

07:44 And it's through that network of acquaintances that we actually really can leverage our networking cause they know more people than us. They don't have us in a box of who they think we are. Exactly. And they can reach out far and beyond what that close circle can. So I really encourage you to make sure that you're collecting that acquaintance network, that network that goes just a little bit further out. And who do you want to connect with? Really it is anyone. I often hear people tell me like, well you know, why would I need to connect with that person? You know, they're a school teacher and I'm a physicist. Well you don't know who that school teacher is married to. Who her brother is, who her father, sister, uncle best friend is, who knows? Maybe they work for NASA and if you're a physicist, that would be a great connection.

08:45 So again, it's those kind of loose connections that really make that difference. So don't assume because someone doesn't do exactly what you do or doesn't have the exact same circle as you do, that they're not valuable to network with. Often some of my best clients and some of my best work comes from those acquaintances. And that's what the science says too. If, if you measure it, it's that connection with people and those, those thinner connections that often yield really, really great results. So really the advice there is network with everyone. There's no one who you shouldn't be networking with. And a great example, even for myself is just this week I went to a, um, a decorating class. I love to do DIY projects and this was teaching me how to do something new. And while there, um, one of the guys that was seated at my table, really, really interesting person and we got talking, we ended up, we, I now live in, in North Carolina, but it was really funny.

09:51 We had a mutual connection all the way back in Minnesota where he lived for a while, uh, that we're both pretty good friends with. So we started really chatting. I've learned about what he does. He does some amazing work, um, at one of the universities. And I was like, I need to know this guy. I need him in my network. So I immediately went on and I linked him into LinkedIn cause I want him to be in my network longterm. His mom happens to be a friend of mine, right? And again, he could potentially be someone that I want to work with or he could be someone that I want to connect someone else with. So I linked him in, which is my easiest way of kind of keeping track of my network. So let's go over LinkedIn for just a second. Cause I think that's an important thing.

10:40 Again, I watch many people when we talk about their LinkedIn account, they're like, well, I don't really know that person. So I feel funny linking them in folks. LinkedIn is not Facebook. Okay, I totally get it. I'm Facebook on your social media. You want those close friends and family around you and you want to keep that network tight and I completely agree with you. I actually really don't love connecting with business acquaintances. On my Facebook page, I want to put my personal stuff out there. I want to put stuff about my kids. I want to put stuff about my family. I want to put my political views out there. I want to be who I am and not worry about people's judgment, where on my LinkedIn account that I open up much wider in networking because that's where I want to have influence in my industry.

11:31 It's where I want to have influence in the world. I want to help all of you with your careers. You know any of you are welcome to link me in on LinkedIn and, and if you are listening to the podcast and you have not linked me in on LinkedIn, you know, definitely do so and drop me a little note that says, Hey, Jennifer listened to your podcast and I really want to know more about what you're doing. Would love that. So I love my LinkedIn network. So don't hesitate on who to put in your LinkedIn network. Allow other people to join. Now one little caveat out there is right now on LinkedIn, there is a lot of advertising going on and I will say if someone connects, tries to connect with me and it's that like, Oh I see you also are a coach and I help coaches make \$1 million.

12:21 Those folks I don't link in with cause I really don't want to listen to their propaganda and they're out there on that taking side of things. They, they want my business. You know, I want people who genuinely are interested in what I do and I can be interested in what they do as well. So that's probably my one caveat on choosing who I link in and not because I do want quality people within my network. So anyone is someone that can be interesting to put within that network. So now once you have it now, now what do you do with it? How do you cultivate that network? Well, again, going back to great books, I love Adam Grant and I love his book, give and take. And he talks there about how there are some people who are givers and they're on one extreme and there's some people who are takers and they're on the other extreme.

13:16 And I do often think when people think of networking, they're so worried they're going to be a taker and seeing, again kind of in that slimy used car salesman type thing. But there's a really sweet spot in the middle and that's who Adam Grant says is most successful. There are people who know how to balance between giving and taking. So that's how you cultivate your network. I try to spend, spend a little bit of time every day cultivating my network. Now this doesn't mean going crazy. I'm not someone who gets on the phone and calls 20 people. I just, I look at it and I think who can I help today and what, what can I do to make their lives a little bit easier? And for me, one of the easiest places to touch someone again is going back to LinkedIn. So if I'm reading an article and there's something there that I know that Mike is interested in, um, and I'll use, Mike is a good example.

14:16 He's a data researcher and so if I see something new about data research that I

had never seen before, that's really, really interesting. I might send him a private message and link the article to it and just give them a little note. Mike, thinking about you saw this article XYZ was really, really interesting and you know, thought you might want to know about it. Often I get a quick reply back. Thanks Jen. Love that. You know, thanks for thinking of me some constantly trying to feed these things out and help people. You know, obviously I work a lot in the career space, so past, present clients, um, people within my network. If I know they're looking for a job and I see a job posting out there, that can be something that's of interest to them. That's the easiest thing I can do is just send them a quick link to this job postings.

15:09 This thought of you for this, this might be interesting for you. Again, little touches there of cultivating my network and I know if I'm helping everyone on a regular basis, when I need help, it feels okay to ask for help. And I think that's really important. It is okay to ask for help. And that's again what Adam Grant says is that that balance of that you give and you're allowing yourself to take, that's where the sweet spot of success falls in. So you want to cultivate that network you want to share and you want to know how to appropriately ask for help. Asking for help though I think is one of the things that many people struggle with. And I think it's part of the place where they struggle with networking. A few years back I went through a leadership program and the leadership program really focused on asking for help and I will tell you, it made me super uncomfortable.

16:11 I am an independent woman. I try to do things on my own and I really try not to ask for help. Well through this program, um, I had a really, really powerful experience and uh, I was working with a partner and I didn't ask for help and of course it's a leadership program so they totally set us up that we had to ask for help to be successful. And it was interesting because I'm both of us strong with women. Um, we're trying to carry our own weight, uh, is the way I would describe it and not trying to ask the other one for help. And we totally failed at our task. And when we really sat down and analyzed it afterwards we realized that we were trying to be too nice to each other to not ask, but we were, I was mad at her for not asking me for help and she was mad at me for not asking for help.

17:09 And it really was this eye opening experience of, Hmm, I'm programmed to want to help other people. And I strongly believe others are programmed to want to help. So it was this moment of clarity of in a way, how dare I not ask for help because I am depriving someone else from feeling good because they were able to help me. Major light bulb moment in my life totally changed my perspective on asking for help. I learned for me to feel good every day. I love to help someone and I love, I love to be asked to help someone because it allows me to give, it makes me feel good. So who is I to deprive others from this pleasure of being able to help someone? So it's a little bit different twist of a perspective and I really wanted to share that with you because I think it's so important to networking.

18:16 And again, it's that balance between giving and taking that it really allows things to allow you to flourish. And that's always my goal, right? Is to help my clients flourish.

So that's kind of what networking is and kind of some of the basics of how to network. But I often also get asked, where do I network? How do I network? Where do I show up? You know, isn't, what does networking actually look like? Well, again, let me tell you what it's not. And I think a lot of you will be relieved. It is not just showing up to networking events, especially not things like the chamber of commerce meeting or um, you know, any of the classic networking events depending on who you are. Though I do want to say that those can be good events, but typically you show up at those events and who shows up your insurance salesman, your, uh, um, financial planners, your coaches, you know, anyone who can meet anyone and they're a potential client.

19:29 Often there's job-seekers who are there, right? So you're showing up with people who might be in the same boat as you are, right? So this is not a great place to network. I'm not saying that you'll never meet somebody interesting at one of these things, and if you are an extrovert and you love going to these community events, have at it. But for those people who are introverts, I decided long ago, forget it. I'm not doing those events any more. So what do I do? How do I cultivate my network? Well, one, I know what I value. I know what's important to me and I always start there for any of my clients. What's important to you? What do you like to do? Well, I'm creative, right? So I showed up at a workshop the other day and I saw it as a networking opportunity.

20:17 You know, I was happily creating, um, you know, some home decor items and chatting with other people. We had something in common right away cause we were both there doing this. And it's a great place to network. So think about what you value. One of the other things I value is learning. I love learning and I'm infinitely curious. So I love showing up to anything that I can learn. I love conferences that focus on topics that are even outside my comfort zone. One of my favorite conferences ever is a small conference called pop tech. And I love it because people from all different industries come in and it's not just one thing, it's not likeminded people. It's a diverse group of folks. And that's really important to me. So I love going to that event and to network. I love going to, again, learning activities.

21:11 You know, if I want to learn a new skill, again, if we're both there, we're both there for learning. We have something in common right away. We both have something to talk about. It is super easy networking. So I suggest things like that. What are things that you love to do? I've got some great friends who, um, you know, are really into athletics. They're bikers and runners and they've joined clubs for that. I can people from all walks of life join those, those clubs and those organizations. And there's no better networking than spending hours, you know, on a trail with someone running. There's all kinds of things that you can talk about. So figure out what's what you love in your life and do more of that so that you can get out there and network makes it super easy to show up, right? No hesitation.

22:00 There's no dread of, Oh my God, I got to go to this networking event tonight. What am I going to wear? What am I going to do? How am I gonna present myself? What am I going to say? Who am I gonna talk to? Right? Those are the things that prevent us


from going, but I promise you, if I am excited about going to an educational opportunity, because again, that's my values. I am not worried about what I'm going to wear. I'm not worried about what I'm going to say. I am ready to get out there and I can't wait to get to that event. So figure out what you value and then figure out what you'd love to learn, what you'd love to do and show up. Cause I promise you any of these things can be great networking and especially if you're out there looking for a job and there's meetups in a city that have to do with your specialty show up.

22:48 There's other people who are doing what you're doing there. And those are people who have great networks that you can tap into. So really easy way to network. I do want to share my all time favorite networking activity though it by far yielded the best networking and I never saw it coming. I had the opportunity to take improv classes. Well maybe I should rephrase that. I took the opportunity to take improv classes. I was in a great city of Minneapolis and they have the brave new workshop, improv classes there, and I decided I wanted to improve my public speaking and presentation skills. So it was very much, that was a reason why I was doing, it had nothing to do with networking and I, it was just something I wanted to learn. I wanted to be more comfortable in meetings. I wanted to learn to be able to present better, so I decided to take an improv class.

23:48 OMG, it was by far the best networking because who takes net, who takes improv classes, other people who one are either wonderfully funny and wonderfully witty because they want to actually be improv actors. So just a blast or other people like myself, professionals who really want to up their game doing great presentations. I met so many different people and these improv classes, and many of them, I would say 75% of them were executives at the other organizations within the Metro area. So amazing networking. And we got to spend a significant amount of time with each other. We were laughing, many of us went on to take, you know, classes or years, you know, the classes ran for like six weeks. I want to say I probably took classes for two years after I started because I just enjoyed the group of people that I was with.

24:50 I enjoyed the learning, I enjoyed the networking and I was building my skills. So improv classes are like my favorite secret networking kind of event. So totally think about that, especially if you've been thinking about upping those presentation skills. Totally double duty and great fun while you're at it. So that gives you some really good ideas about what networking is and is not right. It is that giving and sharing and, and really connecting with people and helping them out and you can give. So then when you do need to ask for help, you can turn around and ask for that help in a really genuine way. And you feel good about asking for help and you know that people love to help people. So you're not afraid to ask for that. Help. We've talked about networking, suggestions about really looking at what's important to you, what do you value, and doing those activities to network.

25:54 Because what I know is when you network and you have fun, that's when good things happen, right? If you're dreading that networking event, that energy comes into the space. So we want you to do things that you have fun with and also remember that



it feels good to give. So when you approach networking from that attitude of I get to go and give, it really does help boost our confidence. It helps change our mindset, right? When we moved from thinking about networking as a taking thing to a giving thing, it really changes that mindset. It boosts our confidence and we really can connect with people at a great level. Really will help our career grow and be successful. Well, thanks for hanging out with me for today. It has been a blast to talk about networking. I hope I've been able to change your mindset and help you build some confidence around the areas of networking.

26:58 If you love this podcast, it would mean the world to me. For you to reach out on iTunes and give us a great review and tell us what you love about this podcast. I am having a blast coming to you every week and want to be able to contribute more. Also, do take some time and connect with me on LinkedIn. Would love to know a little bit about you. Send me a quick little note that says, Hey, Jen listened to your podcast and would love to learn more. Well, thank you again and have a great week and get out there and do some fun networking.