

Prospecting Weekly

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Your Network is Sacred

by Keith F. Luscher
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Do you know why some people are hesitant to use social media? Or perhaps why some people will absolutely never give out their email address (but are quick to hand over their phone number)? Or perhaps did you ever wonder why not everyone you meet will be immediately willing to put you in touch with everybody they know?

Your network, and the strength of relationships with people in your network, is one of your most valuable assets. A network of followers, friends, business contacts, colleagues, and clients is by no means a commodity. Therefore, it is not something you should take for granted.

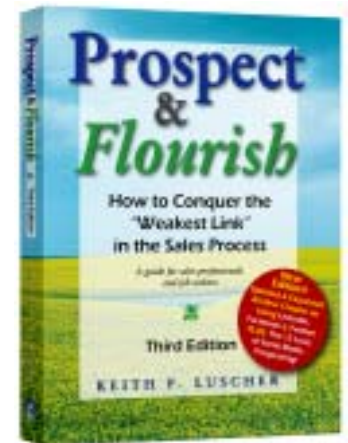
Just as many of you read *Prospecting Weekly*, you may do so via email subscription. My base of subscribers is one of my networks—and thus I want to be responsible and respectful of how I serve the people in that network. I send out value-based content typically once per week. If I were to begin sending out redundant messages or spam-like emails several times per week or even every day, what would happen to that subscriber base? It would shrink. People would remove themselves from the list, or tell their email clients to automatically send me to the junk folder.

Andrew Chiodo (www.valueposition.com), a friend and colleague of mine here in Columbus, Ohio refers to this asset as *Social Capital*. In fact, it's the title of a book he wrote and came out in 2007. According to Chiodo: "The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other ['norms of reciprocity]."

Further, your network is made up of people just like you and they deserve respect. You should treat them the way you know they want to be treated.

Just as you regard your own network as being sacred and a valuable asset, so do each of your own contacts and friends. In fact, your network's networks are indeed part of your own, just as the three-tier structure on LinkedIn illustrates. These are not people with whom you may be directly connected, but you are still connected.

When seeking referrals and introductions be them in person or online, you will need to show equal respect, consideration, and sensitivity to members in your friend's network. In fact, the more connected each of your own network members are, the deeper your network becomes. It's not just about width (your direct connections); it's about depth (the connections of your network members, and so on).



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Keith F. Luscher, is author of the book *Prospect & Flourish*, and four other books. He is an insurance advisor with Principal Financial Group®. Prior to joining Principal®, he served professionals in the insurance and financial services industries as a management consultant. In that role, he advised producers on issues related to marketing and prospecting, and developed groundbreaking educational curriculum. In addition, Luscher is also a nationally known author, speaker, and expert in media, interpersonal communication and marketing.