

WITH ALL THIS TECHNOLOGY,



Why Are Face-to-Face Encounters
So Important?

Showing up is **80%** of the battle.



By Elizabeth Mell

Nothing can take the place of face-to-face meetings. It's true that "staying connected" is crucial and most easily done through online communications. The next method is the telephone. Those who know how to use it, and use voice mail effectively, get much more done. Picking up the phone is more meaningful than sending an email. We've all done business with people who send emails or replies simply to log the "response" on the score card. We all know the *"Hi, it's me. I have a quick question for you. Can you give me a call when you get a chance?"* If the question is so quick, why didn't you just state it? I could already have the answer for you by now.

The simple truth is being in another person's presence puts loyalty into play. Energy is carried with physical presence. Being in the same room with your counterpart provides opportunity to make impressions on the four other senses (aside from hearing). Standing in plain sight helps your colleague or prospect more clearly understand what you are trying to convey. You have a far better chance to persuade if you can tap into all of their five senses.

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In this age, you will distinguish yourself by simply showing up when so few people make the effort. If you do show up, do it on time, don't bury your face in your phone, and don't leave early. Such behavior sends out cues that whoever is emailing you is more important than the person in front of you, or you'd rather be somewhere else—which may be true—but there is no reason to sabotage the effort you just made to get into the room. Be present in the moment.

Reliance on email diminishes the engagement of each person in the group. Studies on the subject of email have been conducted for years. "...collaborative projects suffer when workers doubt colleagues will do their share, creating a sense of injustice that leads them to shirk their own responsibilities," says University of Illinois Professor Gregory Northcraft. In the article summarizing his 2010 research, "Relying Too Much on Email is Bad for Business" in *The News Bureau*, Professor Northcraft discusses how "...high-tech communication strips away the personal interaction needed to breed trust, a key ingredient in getting workers to pull together and carry their share of the load."

He recommends that businesses take steps to balance communications modes and trust building amongst employees so that no one feels they can avoid ownership for the mission. The ongoing research and news, embraced by *LinkedIn*, *Pulse*, *Forbes.com* and *TIME*, all point in the same direction. But we didn't need a business leadership expert to tell us that email ping-pong can be annoying and can be considered lazy. And let's face it, with or without Candy Crush, no one is listening on conference calls.

It's truer today more than ever that genuine interest comes from personal encounters—especially for professionals in client service trying to maintain relationships and cultivate prospects. Professor Northcraft says, "Physical contact has a half life." Translated into client relationships, which means if you haven't seen your best referral source in six months, it behooves you to pick up the phone today and set up lunch. Companies may be creating a culture that is actually bad for their business, but that doesn't mean you have to engage in behaviors that are bad for your career.

Marketing yourself needs to be part of your daily routine. All of the components of marketing and business development work together. Limiting yourself to one-sided activities, while ignoring people, won't work. Trust me, meeting with contacts, going to lunches and attending receptions moves your career way farther, way faster. You don't even have to call it



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"networking" anymore. If you would rather have a root canal than socialize the old fashioned way, you should use a good coach or mentor. Formal coaching programs are available and informal mentors can be found. Accidental mentors are all around you. Seek one out. Personal encounters mean interaction, interaction leads to connection, and connection means business.

1. Be honest with your coach or mentor about your apprehension.
2. Seek out a colleague in the office who can join you in a buddy system approach.
3. Rehearsing helps and having a partner to run your lines makes a world of difference.

Showing up is 80% of the battle. 🏹