



T: 919.857.4699

F: 919.833.8819

19 E. Martin Street
Suite 300
Raleigh, NC 27601

www.ncconservationnetwork.org

NC Conservation Network

Tip Sheet #1: Building relationships with influential people (or not)

Created by: Nicole Stewart, Organizer, nicole@ncconservationnetwork.org
January 24, 2011

Building relationships with influential people (or not)

You know you need to, but you're not sure how. Maybe you're an introvert, and would rather read a good book than go to a networking event. Maybe you're too busy to meet new folks. Maybe you just don't want to. Regardless, you know you need to – you need to network, socialize, and build relationships with folks who can get you what you, your organization, and your campaigns need. So, how do you do it?

Below are a few motivating and how-to tips for not only meeting, but for building relationships with influential people – those people who have the power to give you what you need. Whether those people are media, elected officials, or business leaders doesn't matter. What matters is that you meet them and are genuine about your relationships.

First, here are some examples of what not to do. These five tips are generally real turn-offs – so if you're looking to build a relationship, I'd advise against the following:

Here's how NOT TO build relationships with influential people:

Tip #1: Don't reach out to anyone ever. Don't seek people out at events (heck, don't even go to events). Don't have friends introduce you to anyone. Don't cold call or email people.

Tip #2: When you do meet someone, don't shake their hand and definitely don't look them in the eye. Better yet, shake their hand, but with a really loose grip and only for a second. You don't want to give them the wrong impression.

Tip #3: Talk all about yourself and your organization. Don't ask the influential person anything about their interests. This may be the only chance you have to ever talk to this person, so go in hard and tell them everything that there is to know about your project. Oh, and while you're at it...ask directly and aggressively. NOW!

Tip #4: Whatever you do, don't follow up. And, definitely don't bother sending anything you promised to send them. They aren't going to read it anyway.

Tip #5: Definitely don't look for other opportunities to run into this person again. In fact, you should avoid them like the plague.

On the flip side, here are some tips you should follow.

Here's how TO build relationships with influential people (or anyone really):

Tip #6: Just do it. Get out of your shell. Go to events you know these folks will be at. Have a friend introduce you. Cold call. What do you have to lose...seriously? You'll have NOTHING to lose, if...

Tip #7: You are genuine and polite. The last person anyone wants to meet is someone who is clearly trying too hard, isn't listening, or is brown-nosing. So, keep it real and, be yourself. The person you are trying to meet and get to know is just that – a person. As the golden rule says, "Do unto others..."

Tip #8: Follow-up. If you say you're going to send someone something – do it and in a timely fashion.

Tip #9: Keep in touch. Make the next contact. Email a couple weeks/months later to schedule a coffee. But, make sure you have something to talk about – don't just meet to meet (that comes later).

Tip #10: Maintenance is just as important (if not more) than the initial meeting if you really want to build a lasting relationship. It could take years to get to where you can easily ask for what you need. But, be patient and keep at it. Heck, you might just make a friend in the process!

Bonus Tip: Keep it natural. Grow with the relationship – not against it or ahead of it. Relationships develop, so recognize the state yours is at and treat it appropriately.

Future Tip Sheet Ideas?

[Email](#) Nicole Stewart, NC Conservation Network.