

# Building and Maintaining a Professional Network

T.R. Straub | August 6, 2015



HEYMAN ASSOCIATES  
THE PROFESSION. THE PEOPLE. THE FUTURE.

# About Heyman Associates



Heyman Associates and its global affiliates – Taylor Bennett in the U.K. and joint venture Taylor Bennett Heyman in Asia and Australia – bring together almost 60 years of experience placing top communications and public affairs talent in executive positions at high-profile corporations, foundations and educational institutions across North America, Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific region.



TAYLOR BENNETT



TAYLOR BENNETT HEYMAN

# Heyman Associates: areas of focus



- **Public affairs:** government relations and communications
- **Corporate communications:** director-level up to C-suite appointments
- **Organization types:** corporations, industry associations, non-profit foundations and academic institutions
- **Industries:** all, with an emphasis on health care, energy and financial institutions

# About T.R. Straub



T.R. is a Vice-President with Heyman Associates. He has managed a range of searches – including for public affairs, corporate communications and media relations positions – in the consumer goods, healthcare, energy, non-profit and higher education sectors. He also supervises the firm's research team, managing strategy and execution of client-focused projects.

Prior to joining Heyman, T.R. worked for Teach for America, most recently as Recruitment Director. In his role, he managed recruitment efforts at liberal arts colleges and state universities and developed the hiring and training programs for over 250 interns. Previously, as a corps member, he taught high school social studies in Baltimore City, MD.

T.R. graduated from the University of Richmond with a dual degree in Leadership Studies and Political Science and then earned his Master of Arts in Teaching from The Johns Hopkins University. He remains active at his *alma mater*, serving on the Jepson School of Leadership Studies Alumni Corps and the University of Richmond Alumni Recruitment Committee.

T.R. is a member of the College of Charleston's Communications Advisory Council, is the Chair of the board for the New York region of Citizens of the World Charter Schools and serves as a guest speaker at colleges and universities, for both undergraduate and graduate programs, on career development topics in communications.

# Networking and my own career path



Networking has been essential to my career:

- Informational meetings in college
- Internal networking throughout Teach For America while teaching in Baltimore
- Maintained relationships during time at Teach For America
- College connection led to Heyman Associates
- Some targeted, some organic



# Poll question #1



How comfortable are you with in-person networking (conferences, meetups, coffees, dinners)?

- ☐ **Very uncomfortable.** I avoid in-person networking at all costs.
- ☐ **Somewhat uncomfortable.** I would need to have a very good reason to attend.
- ☐ **Neutral.** I'm not opposed to networking opportunities, but I do not actively seek them out.
- ☐ **Somewhat comfortable.** It's a harmless and necessary part of building a career.
- ☐ **Very comfortable.** I absolutely love networking and do it whenever I can.

## Poll question #2



When was the last time you attended a networking event?

- ☐ **In the past week**
- ☐ **In the past month**
- ☐ **In the past year**
- ☐ **I have never attended a networking event**

# Major themes



- **Anyone can network.** Effective networking is a learned skill, not some innate talent that you either have or don't have.
- **Networking is a process.** Networking is about building a career, not finding a job tomorrow. It takes follow-up and a commitment to building genuine connections with people.
- **Networking is a two-way street.** Focus as much on what you can offer others as on what they can offer you.
- **In-Person > LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is useful for many things, but it is tough to make a meaningful connection through computer screens.
- **Avoid networking *faux pas*.**

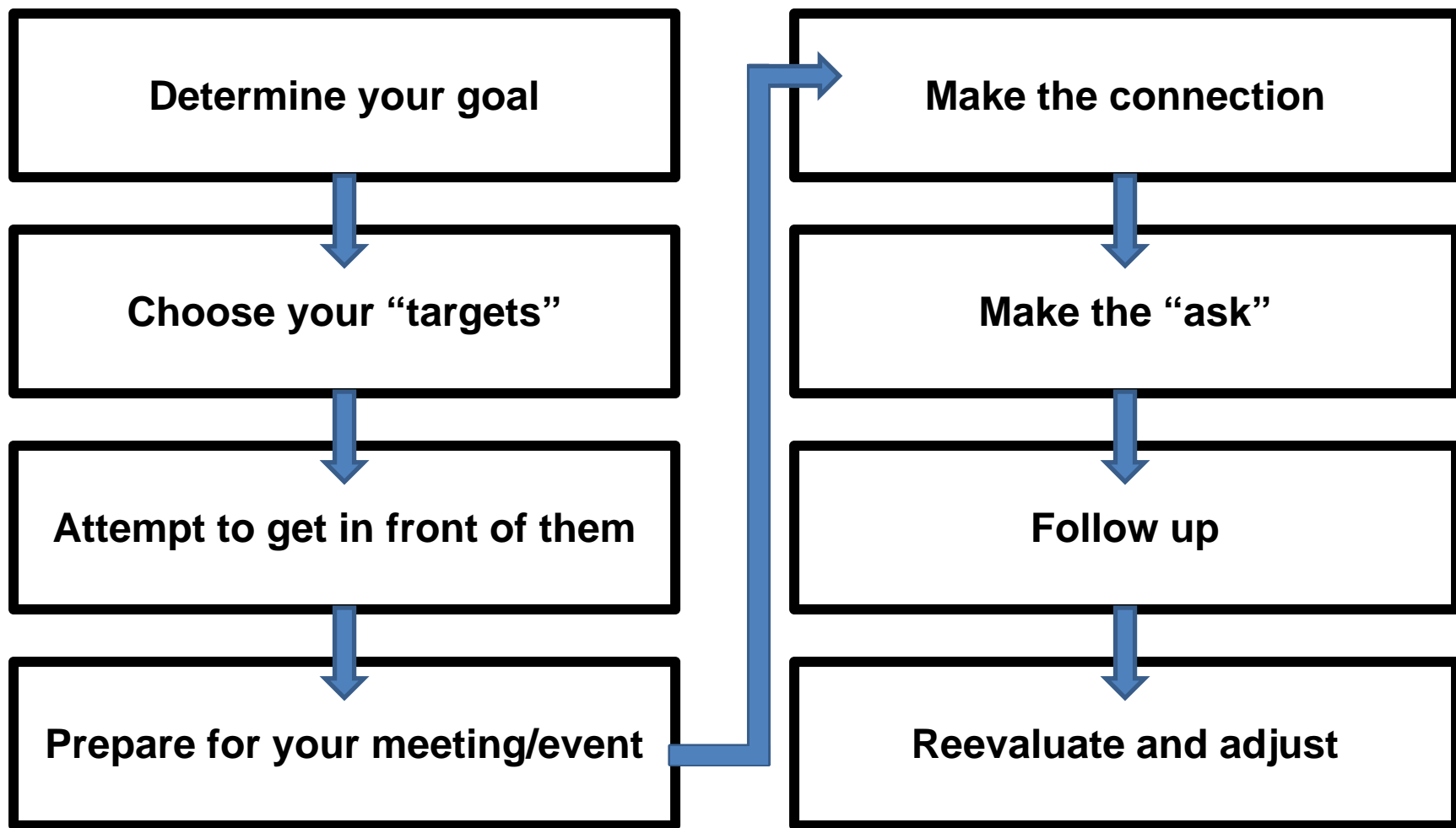


# Anyone can network



- Hurdles to networking:
  - Anxiety
  - Lack of time
  - Not knowing where to start
  - Not having an immediate “need”
- Comfort levels with networking vary.
- Networking is a job skill, which requires work. Not everyone is a “natural.”
- The bottom line? Have a goal and a structured approach.

# Networking is a process



## Poll question #3



Right now, what are you most interested in getting out of your networking efforts?

- ☐ **Learn more about my industry**
- ☐ **Land a new job**
- ☐ **Build my business / win new clients**
- ☐ **Create long-term career prospects**

# Determine your goals



- Ideally, goals are long-term.
- Sometimes, short-term goals arise.
- Attempt to lay a strong foundation before having an immediate need.
- Bottom line: difference between strategy and tactics

# Choose your networking targets



- Apply a public affairs approach.
- Questions to ask:
  - *Who has a job that you would be proud to hold one day?*
  - *Who works where you would love to work?*
  - *Who has the sort of clients that you dream of having someday?*
  - *Who, at some point in the future, might be a good person to know?*
  - *Who can help you get your message out?*
- Likely targets:
  - *Senior leaders in organizations you'd aspire to join*
  - *Senior, visible influencers in the public affairs function*
  - *Peers in aspirational organizations or in the function*
  - *Recruiters/headhunters*

# Get in front of your targets



- Your main options:
  - **One-on-one meetings** (harder, but more specific and beneficial)
  - **Group events** (easier and more abundant, but less targeted)
- How to get to a one-on-one meeting:
  - Follow up after an event
  - Leverage a common connection
  - Make a cold contact

# Common connections



- Common connections establish credibility.
- This is where LinkedIn can help you the most.
- The fewer degrees of separation, the better.



## Jennie Means

3<sup>rd</sup>

Assistant, Public Affairs Practice at Public Affairs Council  
Washington D.C. Metro Area | Government Administration

Previous Bucknell University Career Development Center, U.S. House  
of Representatives, Obama for America

Education Bucknell University

Connect

Send Jennie InMail

214

connections



<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/jennie-means/51/816/b0>

## How You're Connected



You



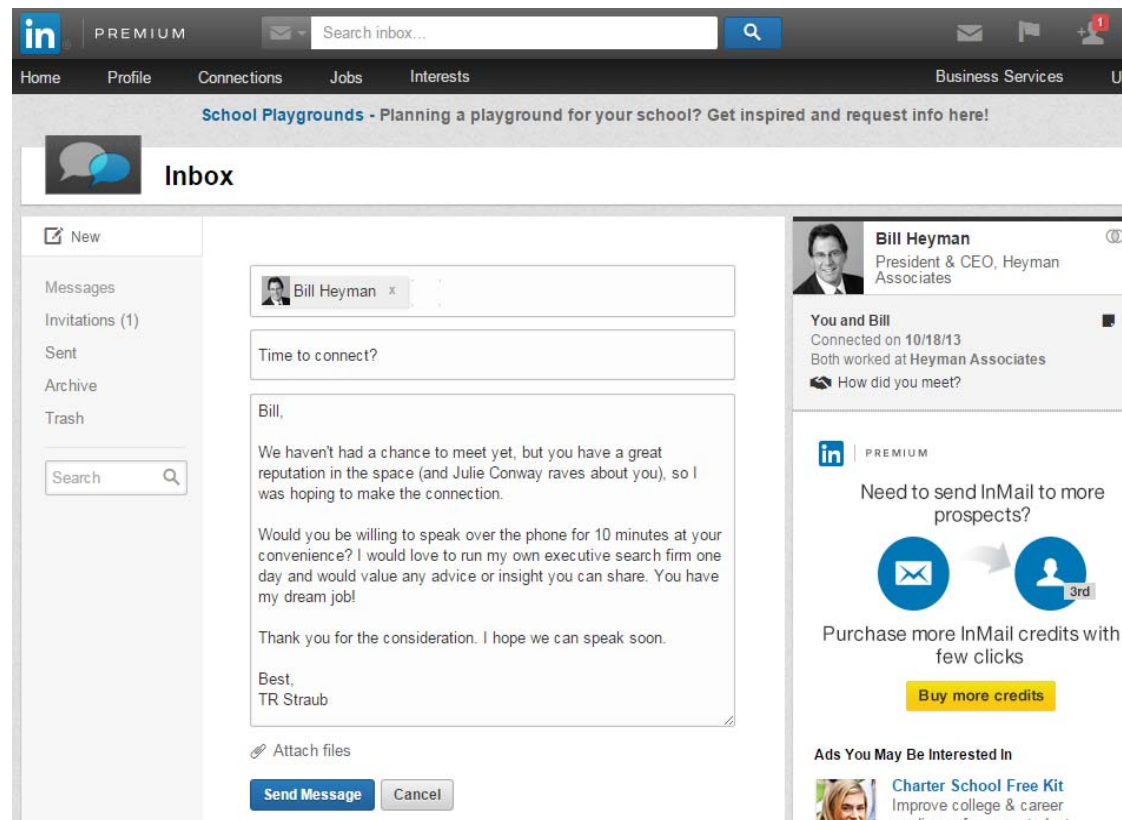
Lisa Ryan 1<sup>st</sup>

SVP/Managing Director at Heyman A...

# The dreaded cold call



- Use LinkedIn (or public contact info)
- Include flattery
- Ask for insight and perspective (not a job)
- Make a small “ask”
- Be kind, complimentary and direct





# Prepare for your meeting



- You've done the hardest part, but your job isn't over yet.
- Google, LinkedIn and even Twitter are your friends.
- This is deep background information. Be informed, not a stalker.
- Be prepared to share your own relevant/related experiences.
- Preparation = Confidence

# Make the connection

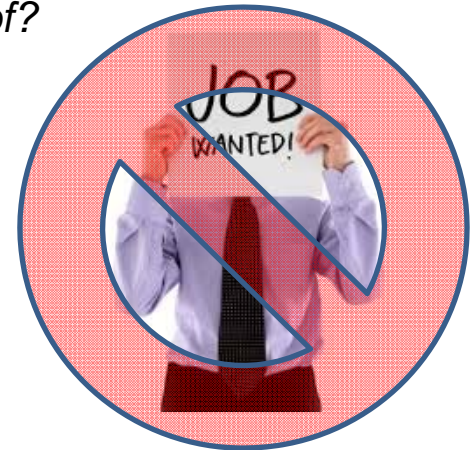


- The more you prepare, the easier this is.
- Make (substantive) small talk.
- Prepare a two-sentence “elevator pitch” about yourself.
- Smile. Be positive. Try to put others at ease.
- Ask questions. Show interest.

# Make the “ask”



- Have an answer to: “how can I help you?”
- Keep your “ask” small.
  - *Are there organizations you can recommend that I join?*
    - *...and can you share information about that organization?*
  - *Are there other people you think I should get to know?*
    - *...and would you be willing to make the introduction?*
  - *Can I use you as a resource to bounce ideas off of?*
- Offer something of value in return.



# Follow up and stay in touch



- After the event, take down notes on the people you've met.
- From time to time, check in with the people in your network.
- Try to be thoughtful and helpful.
- Don't burn out your connections.
- Don't expect instant gratification.
- Don't rely on others to put in the effort.
- Devise ways to connect the people in your own network.
- Show gratitude when someone helps you.

# LinkedIn v. in-person networking



- Polish your profile. LinkedIn is your first impression.
  - Follow resume rules: focus on accomplishments
  - Keep experience and picture current
  - Proofread!
- LinkedIn is a tool, not a strategy.
- There is no substitute for an in-person connection.

# *Faux pas*



- Dress the part.
- You are there for the people, not the refreshments.
- Don't make a big ask of someone you just met.
- Don't overshare.
- Keep the conversation professional.

# Takeaways



- Having a game plan makes networking more effective and less intimidating.
- Prepare for an event as if it were a job interview, but also keep in mind that networking ought to feel far less intimidating.
- Taking a long-term view and giving more than you take are the keys to building genuine connections.
- Use common sense and treat people how you would want to be treated.

# Questions/Contact



**T.R. Straub**  
Vice President  
Heyman Associates

212 784 2707

[trstraub@heymanassociates.com](mailto:trstraub@heymanassociates.com)

11 Penn Plaza, 22nd Floor  
New York, NY 10001

[www.heymanassociates.com](http://www.heymanassociates.com)



