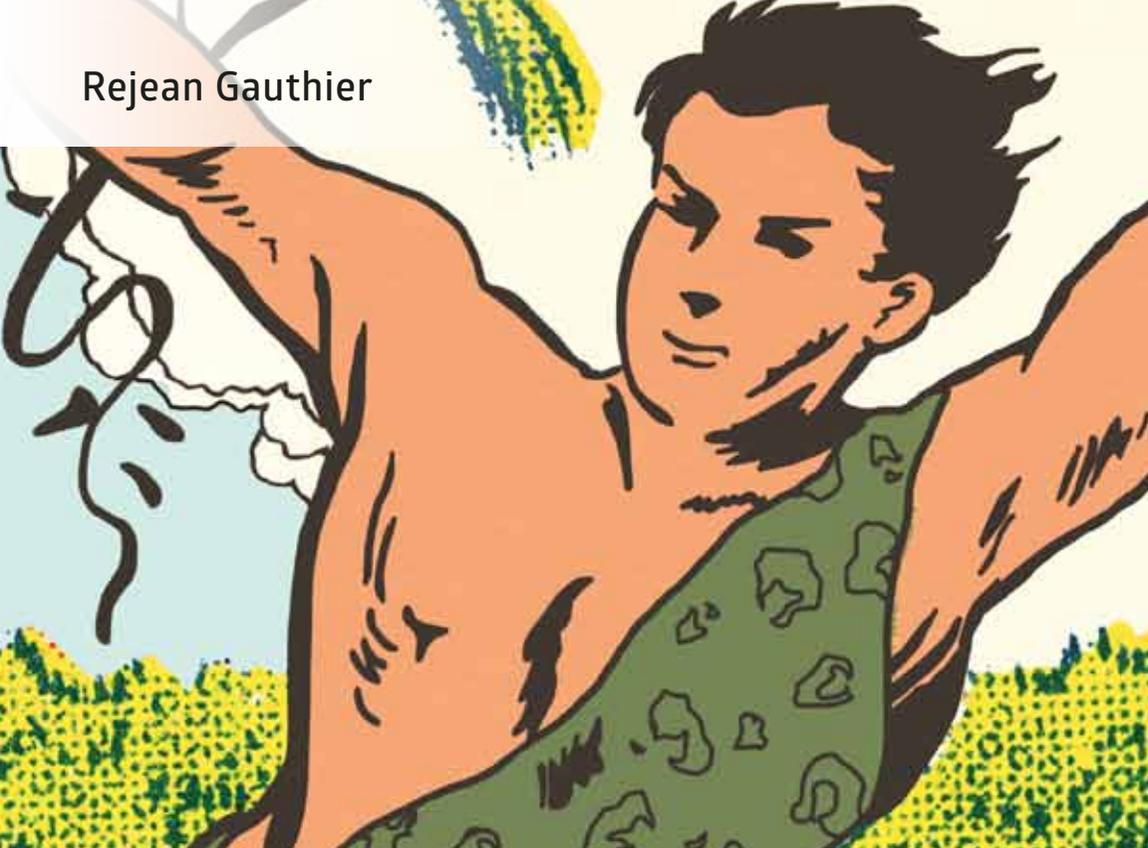


Rejean Gauthier



SURVIVING THE NETWORKING JUNGLE

Your **NETWORK** of contacts is your **best** asset.



Cataloguing in Publication of Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec and Library and Archives Canada.

Gauthier, Rejean,

Surviving the Networking Jungle: Your network of contacts is your best asset

ISBN-13: 978-2-9817102-4-6

1. Business networks. 2. Strategic Alliances (Business).

HD69.S8G382 2014 650.1'3 C2014-941720-9

Review and correction: Jeanne Thiffault and Neil Aucoin

Proofreading: Andree Hamelin

Graphic design: Dorian Danielsen, Marc-Andre Gouge and Nadine Drolet

Layout: Diane Marquette and Nadine Drolet

Photograph of the author: Jeremy Beaudry (Rejean Gauthier)

Edited by: Ann-Alexandre Gauthier, Publishing Consulting Services (2017 Edition)

Revision of new texts: Kelly-Ann Gauthier

Thanks for the Cover design by Francis Ouellet from L'établi - francis@letabli.co

Printed in Canada

© Rejean Gauthier

Legal deposit - Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 3rd quarter 2014

Library and Archives Canada

New edition 2018, Les éditions KARR 4.0

Adaptation of the original work co-written by Rejean Gauthier and Valerie Lesage, published in 2014 by Les Éditions Transcontinental.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Any reproduction of this work, in whole or in part, by any means currently known or to be discovered, is prohibited without the prior authorization of Rejean Gauthier.

Any use not expressly authorized constitutes an infringement that may lead to legal action against the individual or the establishment that performs the unauthorized reproduction.

I would like to thank everyone who made this project possible.

A special thanks to all those who shared their stories for this book.

◀ Rejean Gauthier ▶

SURVIVING
THE NETWORKING
JUNGLE

LES ÉDITIONS
KARR 4.0

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	7
How my story begins	9
Introduction	13
The method	14
1 • Free yourself from fear and reach out to others	17
The jungle isn't what it used to be!.....	17
The Jungle's vocabulary	19
2 • Help yourself and the jungle will help you	23
You are your best ally	24
Do others know you?	25
How to choose your connections	27
3 • Building your network one person at a time	31
An à la carte conversation	31
Evaluating the relevance of an encounter	32
The approach.....	33
The right expressions make the right connections.....	34
Formal or informal language?	35
Redirecting a conversation	36
The key argument.....	37
Getting out of a conversation.....	38
It takes time to build a connection	41
4 • Seeing more clearly between the branches	45
Tidying up your contacts	45
Step 1: drawing up a list of your contacts.....	46
Connecting with builders.....	48
Step 2: Identifying builders	51
Step 3: think big!.....	51
5 • The RG scale: climbing to the profit zone	57
The 5 levels of the RG Scale.....	57

Are your contacts on the right levels?	59
Application	59
Developing your network	60
Maintaining your network.....	61
6 • Koala techniques for reaching big trees.....	67
Buying products and services.....	68
Making recommendations.....	69
Gratitude.....	71
Complimenting.....	73
Highlighting your similarities.....	73
Using social networks.....	74
Staying informed about events.....	74
Reconnecting.....	75
7 • The winning trio: listening, notes and follow-up.....	85
Listening	86
Taking notes	90
The follow-up.....	91
Helping others build their network.....	94
8 • Strengthening your vines.....	101
Tarzan's four best qualities.....	104
A quick test.....	104
Never underestimating others	105
Never diminishing others	106
9 • Preparing for an adventure	111
The objectives.....	114
10 • Adapting: chameleon tricks	117
The Jungle Animals	118
11 • The jungle undergrowth: 15 places for networking	123
1. The after-work activities.....	123
2. Junior chambers of commerce.....	127
3. Networking groups.....	128
4. Private clubs	129
5. Boards of directors	130
6. Professional orders and associations.....	131
7. Training workshops	131
8. Exhibitions and trade fairs	132

9. Travel.....	133
10. Volunteer work.....	135
11. Charity events.....	135
12. Parents' committees.....	136
13. Sports centers.....	137
14. Golf.....	137
15. Social media.....	137
Have fun!.....	144
Ten things to do during networking activities.....	145
12 • Me, Jane, you, Tarzan; networking as a woman	147
13 • Be polite, Tarzan!.....	155
Conclusion	157
Suggested reading.....	158

List of the interviews

My tree + your tree = success with Dominique Brown.....	52
How to hunt in the jungle without missing your target With Alain Parrot	62
A bold man in the jungle! with François Ducharme	78
A self-made man with Michel Gareau	94
The jungle 2.0 with Ann-Alexandre Gauthier.....	140
Alone among men with Marie-France Poulin	148



Acknowledgements

I would like to wholeheartedly thank the many entrepreneurs who have generously contributed to improving *Surviving in the Networking Jungle* by sharing their experiences and thoughts. Marie-France Poulin, Vice President at Kalia and Camada Group, Dominique Brown, President of Chocolats Favoris, François Ducharme, President of TACT Intelligence-Conseil, Michel Gareau, President of Euro Swiss Group, Ann-Alexandre Gauthier, of Courtepointe, as well as Alain Parrot from Parrot Sélect. Thank you for being such an inspiration!

I would also like to thank Valerie Lesage for writing the first version of the book *Surviving in the Networking Jungle* and Ann-Alexandre Gauthier for reviewing the second edition which you are currently reading.



How my story begins

REJEAN GAUTHIER

I grew up as an only child, raised by my mother and grandmother, in a very modest neighborhood of the Quebec City suburb, Limoilou. I was a shy kid that did not really have friends other than my hockey teammates. It was only around the age of 14, when I got my first scooter, that I started going out and meeting other people my age. I expanded my network of friends so much back then that the fun and parties got the upper hand over my studies. It was not without difficulty that I managed to finish high school after attending six different institutions - and that is a lot of networking for a young student. I did not have much interest in school but I had an ardent desire to become a black belt in karate and to open my own martial arts school.

Determination and perseverance allowed me to become the owner of a franchise of Studios Unis d'Auto-Defense at the tender age of 20. I am deeply grateful to the man at the head of this organization, Mr. Clermont Poulin, who believed in me and thanks to whom I was able to realize my childhood dream. I met this first challenge with great enthusiasm and it has brought me great pleasure and many beautiful life

experiences. I quickly understood the workings of the business world and it has been a wonderful learning experience about life in general!

Ten years later, I decided to take my sales skills further by starting a new career as a life and health insurance advisor at Mutuelle du Canada, now called Sun Life Financial. I quickly stood out as a salesman and became trainer of the sales team. In the spring of 1998, I set up my first networking training workshop that I named “The primer of Networking” which was based on my best achievements. I then realized the importance of having a network of quality contacts to achieve business development goals. I was vice-president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Quebec for three years where I allowed several members to benefit from the networking training workshop.

Having always been very interested in the benefits of effective networking, I founded the Happy Few Circle in 2001, a private networking venue that allowed more than 80 entrepreneurs to meet, share and, for many of them, gain considerable benefits. Four years later, supported by my extensive network of contacts, I created a fast food outlet concept named Sushi Fly, which I sold in 2010 after opening 13 outlets across Quebec. In January 2011, I decided to use my experience as an entrepreneur to focus on my activities as a consultant by launching my company *Gauthier Strategies* to support beginners during their start-up phase. I chose this particular customer base because I would have liked to have the support of experienced people when I first went into business myself.

My first client was a man whose dream was to manually build Chris Craft-style wooden boats and to ship them around the world.

I was so enticed by his project that I offered to be his associate and he gladly accepted. For a year, we attended “Boat Shows” in order to

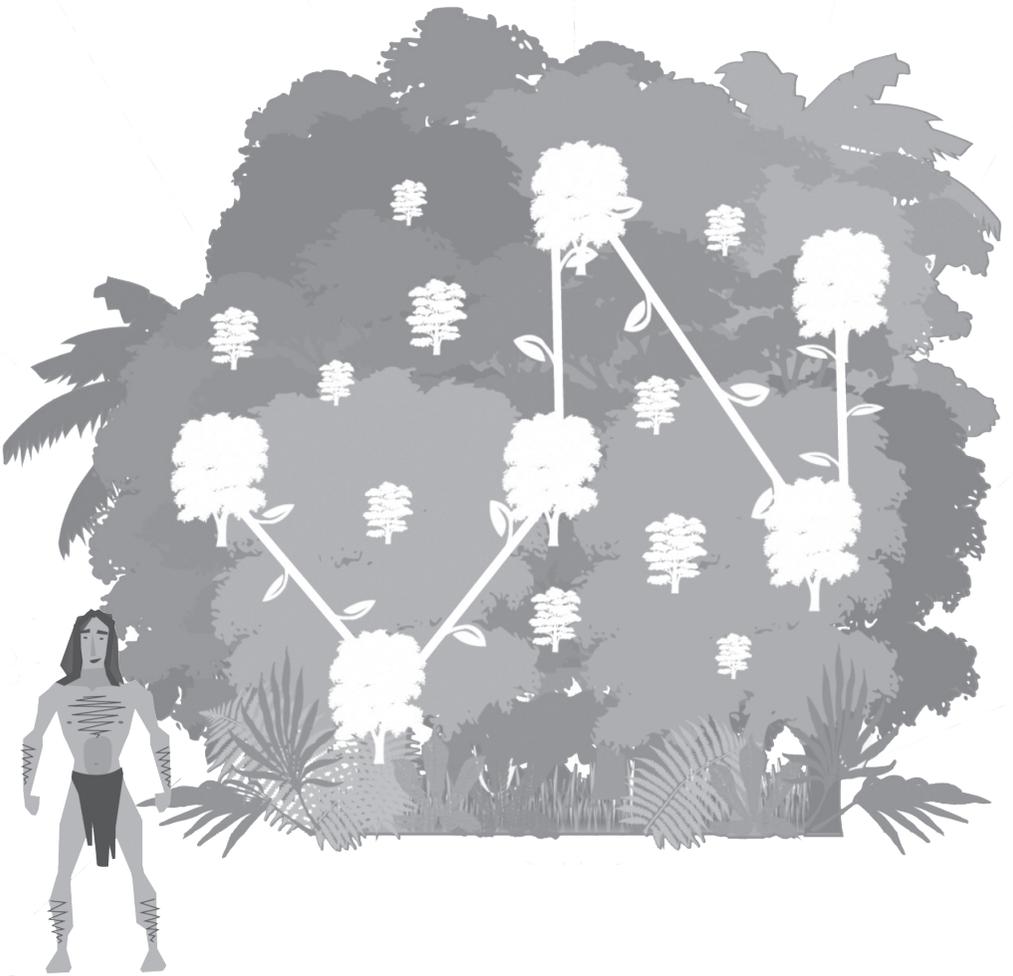
understand the market and evaluate the full potential of our company. We met a European businessman who we ended up partnering with to develop our company in the United States for two years. What a beautiful adventure!

In July 2013, I became co-owner of the business group *Le Cercle Kaizen*, whose main mission is to help its members enhance their personal and professional development.

In September 2013, I launched my second conference-workshop which I named “In the Jungle of Networking.” This interactive and participatory conference for both companies and the general public has, so far, allowed several hundred people to discover the concept of the “RG Scale.” Thanks to this ingenious tool, participants can use a new networking method to better understand the potential their connections have and identify the strategies required to benefit from them.

My extensive experience in the field has made me passionate about networking. Over the last 25 years, I have taken part in nearly 800 after-work and golf parties, business dinners, lunches and everything in between.

In this book, I share my experiences and the result of my extensive reading and reflection on the subject. Throughout my career, I have devoted most of my energy into what I believe in more than anything - the power of networking in personal and professional development.





Introduction

Would you like to become the Tarzan of the Networking Jungle, a hero whose social skills inspire admiration and who always finds the right partner to boost his business? Do you dream of becoming the one who knows of everything that happens and who, like Tarzan, bravely approaches power players while being devoted to helping the up-and-coming? Do you hope to build enough landmarks in the jungle to no longer feel disoriented? The simple and effective networking method developed by Rejean Gauthier in this book will give you tools to expand your network in a strategic way. Like Tarzan who finds the right trees to tie up his vine and progress into the jungle without falling to the ground, it will allow you to identify the right contacts, and thus the right support, to move towards your professional goals.

As you may know deep down, it isn't enough to attend luncheons and after-work activities, be a good conversationalist and collect business cards to progress in the business world (or in life for that matter!). To build lasting, friendly and mutually beneficial connections, discipline is needed. You have to devote yourself and your time, and to make networking a way of life. Certainly, it takes effort and courage at first, but your gains are guaranteed! How? using the techniques and solutions you will learn in this book, which are sure to bring you closer to the people who can drive your business toward success.

THE METHOD

Just as Tarzan has always amazed his peers by being able to communicate with the many inhabitants of the jungle, people who excel in interpersonal relationships are often envied. It seems natural to them. They make it look easy. Wherever they go, they start a conversation with a smile on their face. “But how do they do that? What’s their trick?” This is what people often ask themselves.

Here is one of the answers that we will discuss in greater detail in this book: people are not interchangeable, we must look at them individually for what they are and not consider them as mere numbers, even if they all carry one on the network card that you will discover later! Are they ranked Level 1 on the RG Scale or have they come close to level 4, where smiles are worth more than gold? How do you place a person whom you don’t know but need to know on your scale? This book presents and teaches the RG Scale method, invented by Rejean Gauthier and practiced since 1997. The RG Scale classifies one’s contacts according to their closeness. As we often wonder “Is this the desired degree for this person?” we want to show you how to strengthen your network. Our goal is to go well beyond the already published books on networking. It is not only a question of an easy to forget life philosophy, but of life discipline. A simple and effective discipline that you cannot forego, be it in school, in life or in business. Whether you are a student, future entrepreneur, professional, manager, salesperson or self-employed person, no matter what degree you have or are about to obtain, you will have to make an inventory of your current connections, and those that you want to build in order to move forward.

You will then need to establish a level for each acquaintance, co-worker, collaborator, teammate, friend or family member.

Subsequently, you must decide where you want to see them on your scale: at the knowledge level or in the profit zone? Because it is when a connection shifts from one level to another that it will allow you to achieve your goals. You will then understand, thanks to this book, the

importance of planning your networking activities, maintaining your connections and moving to the referencing stage. These tips and anecdotes will help you explore this strategic aspect in a concrete way.

In addition to learning how to map your connections, in this book, you will also discover how to:

- 🍃 Put an end to mistakes and be sincerely interested in others
- 🍃 Avoid omissions
- 🍃 Go beyond the first meeting and the exchange of business cards
- 🍃 Quickly earn people's trust
- 🍃 Discover the potential of your connections in order to choose where to invest your energy
- 🍃 Grow your business while having a positive impact on the others in your network;
- 🍃 Develop a strategy to expand, maximize and maintain your network
- 🍃 Build positive and mutually beneficial connections
- 🍃 Forge links, links and more links

We believe that everyone has the potential to become a Tarzan or a hero of networking. However, becoming a hero requires training, so follow us into the jungle. The adventure has only just begun!



chapter 1

Free yourself from fear and reach out to others

Since ancient times, mankind has lived in community and had to learn to communicate and work together in order to ensure its survival. Even in smaller communities, each individual had a specific role. In primitive cultures, while the young men were in charge of hunting, elders taught the children how to fish, and women took care of the children and did chores. They were stronger when facing adversity as a group. The villages of yesteryear had, most of the time, a general store, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a doctor, a priest, a cabinetmaker and some farmers. They all needed each other to run their business, even the hermit who lived in the forest walked across the village to beg once in a while. Without the contribution of everyone, the village would have been condemned to bankruptcy, cold, hunger and, ultimately, death. Since the roles were complementary, no one needed self-promotion to obtain customers. In fact, each merchant was in a monopoly or quasi-monopoly position.

THE JUNGLE ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE!

Times have changed. Nowadays, we are witnessing intense competition within communities, as well as at the regional, provincial, national and global levels. Means of transportation and communication have turned the planet into a global village where no one can take customers for granted. Every merchant or company must deal with a mass of competitors, regardless of the distance that separates them.

In order to attract customers, it is necessary to come forward and to stand out from the crowd in an advantageous way.

In this context, networking activities are multiplying, and even if every participant may be aware of their importance for the survival and success of a company, they do not all have the right tools to take advantage of them. There is a considerable part that engages in networking activities as if they were strolling on a Sunday afternoon, with no specific purpose or preparation.

For some, networking is a way of learning and developing oneself thanks to new acquaintances; for others, is a way to exchange with business people on common concerns. The most pragmatic people will say that networking activities are an opportunity to expand one's circle of contacts and socialize, while keeping in mind the main objective: doing business. The shy ones, whose bosses encourage them to come out of their shells, see it as a kind of mandatory application of the skills they were taught in various workshops and training activities related to the subject. The most competitive ones aim to compete and challenge themselves. The best talkers use it to promote their products and services. And finally, the most selfless go out and meet others to help them and listen to their needs.

For us, networking is more like a jungle packed with animals and trees. Picture yourself as Tarzan, alone in an unknown, perhaps even hostile world, depending on your social skills. In order to survive, you will have to acquire good knowledge of every aspect of your environment.

As you progress in the networking jungle, you have to emulate Tarzan by jumping from tree to tree and opting for the strongest support to strategically propel yourself towards your objectives. You're going to need allies, so it is crucial to learn how to communicate. Tarzan adapted so well to his environment that he managed to interact with animals and adjust his language according to the species he encounters. You will do the same with your interlocutors, whether they are business executives or officials.

But unlike Tarzan, you are extremely fortunate: you will only meet human beings! No venomous snake, or panther with sharp fangs, or aggressive gorilla. You will certainly get out of your comfort zone by venturing into the networking jungle, but you will not be risking death. Just some disappointment or setbacks at most. So, no need to worry! It's better to think about what you will earn by freeing yourself from your fears and focusing on your goals.

THE TARZAN YELL:
**I REACH OUT TO
PEOPLE TO SOCIALIZE**

THE JUNGLE'S VOCABULARY

Even if we all know who Tarzan is, let us specify some elements that we will take from his world.

TARZAN

He is humble enough to acknowledge that nothing can be taken for granted. Also, he works every day to maintain and improve his network: it is a question of survival. He is authentic and shows his true self, without artifice. He pays particular attention to exchanging with others in a strategic way and his social skills are just like his muscular, flexible and agile body. Tarzan steps outside of his comfort zone, barefoot. He takes risks while reaching out to others, shows himself and neglects nothing that can make him recognized and appreciated by the jungle inhabitants. He even rescues animals in distress. In other words, he's our hero: the hero of networking.

THE JUNGLE

The jungle represents the ecosystem in which our circles of acquaintances and networking places are located. In other words, our contacts list along with the places and activities conducive to building connections. Hockey club, network of business people, “after works contacts”, family, social and professional address books, etc. Since the jungle is dense and full of obstacles, we have to learn some techniques and be ready to dedicate all our efforts if we want to make our way through this environment.

THE VINES

Vines are what we are, extensions of ourselves, all the parts of our being, that are connected to others. They symbolize our personality, our appearance, our way of behaving and interacting and the way we are perceived. Each vine must be strong and well attached to the branches to help Tarzan cross the jungle from tree to tree. If we are unobtrusive and lack self-confidence, if we have heated exchanges with others, if we are pessimistic, disorganized and late for our meetings or we express controversial opinions without restraint, we represent a fragile vine and we will experience difficulty in moving from one tree to another. The confidence and respect to be gained from those who form the network, as well as the strength and reliability of our vine, depend on the impression we give. By making a good impression, we can rely on our network to advance towards our personal and professional goals, whatever they are.

In this book, we will discuss the attitudes and ways to make a good impression and to forge productive links in order to win the support of the trees.

THE TREES

Trees are the support points, the networks used by the jungle inhabitants. Monkeys, for example, have important networks due to the fact that they live in tribes. Accordingly, they have wide and strong support. Gaining their trust can thus be a significant advantage. With their

permission, we'd attach our vines to their trees rather than the lone panther's. More importantly, we will strive to win the support of the monkeys' leader, the most influential of the tribe, because this is how we can easily jump from tree to tree and get closer to our business goals.

THE ANIMALS

Animals represent people who engage in the same networking activities as us, the people who are part of our network "map." It is necessary to try to understand them on a daily basis in order to quickly identify their needs. And to succeed, we need to adapt to their speech. Tarzan was raised by monkeys. He therefore masters their speech and their environment, but he must also learn to converse with alligators and jaguars if he wants to progress in the jungle. The more he does it, the more he is able to evaluate the potential of his new acquaintances. A little bird may seem fragile compared to the monkeys' leader, but since he can fly over the savannah, the oceans and the rainforest, he has a global view of the jungle where he has his own support points.

With the aim of moving forward, Tarzan must perceive the strengths of each animal, beyond appearances. All the animals have trees, or networks, that they will be glad to share with people they appreciate. Such networks are essential for us to attach our vines and get closer to our goals.



Tarzan is aware that:

- ▀ he needs to network since times have changed
- ▀ he cannot survive alone in the jungle
- ▀ his vines must be strong



chapter 2

Help yourself and the jungle will help you

We have all at some point in our lives been at an after-work activity, a chamber of commerce dinner or a gala where we did not know anyone. The anticipation of this challenging moment that we would have liked to postpone, or even avoid, makes us anxious hours before setting foot there. There are so many good excuses that we would have liked to use to avoid these moments of terrifying loneliness in the middle of the jungle! We all can think of an evening where we remained petrified, looking sad and unobtrusive, with a drink in hand as our only companion.

There are, however, limits to avoidance and you have to be realistic: you will never make good deals by staying at home and hoping for the world to come to you. Apart from the volunteer who collects donations for a foundation, few visitors will knock on your door to offer you a partnership. Therefore, you must be present at these events!

But what is the best attitude to have? Should you wait until another loner approaches you, or should you emulate Tarzan by gathering all your courage and progressing through the jungle? Imitating Tarzan is undoubtedly the best option rather than playing the part of the damsel in distress. After all, the reason for your presence is to build productive encounters rather than languishing while awaiting.

Productive connections are those which will allow you to strategically expand your network. These are the ones that will allow you to get to

the strongest trees in order to attach your vines and move towards a successful future.

By choosing to move forward like Tarzan, you are certainly taking the risk of babbling, being in awkward situations and making a bad impression. Nonetheless, it is a great opportunity to meet the right people for the advancement of your career or your company and to make important discoveries. Seeing the positive aspect of a situation gives you the courage to act. So, focus on the bright side.

YOU ARE YOUR BEST ALLY

Let's suppose that you have arrived at the networking event, with a carefully chosen outfit, a fresh breath, a neat hairstyle, a big smile, a full supply of business cards and a strong determination to meet new people. Should you set your sight on the first comer who will be happy and relieved to be given a little attention, or should you take the opportunity to glean information from various animals? Tarzan would advise you to imitate the butterflies instead of wasting your time with the sloth who is the slowest animal on earth.

You should always keep in mind that your objective is to make deals and not close friends or to meet your future wife. Doing business means making money. And, if you take the opportunity to multiply gatherings and encounters, you will certainly increase your chances of achieving your target. Going to a formal gathering only to congratulate yourself for having set foot there is meaningless. You have to go with a few goals in mind: meeting a person that will help you in your career or help grow your business, approaching people who can get you an internship in their industry, finding potential business partners or associates, or sell your products and services. Think first and foremost about what you need to achieve throughout this activity and stick to your goals.

Does this idea make you feel uncomfortable? Do you feel overwhelmed with guilt at the idea of using others for your benefit? Do you struggle with the idea of maintaining “need-based” connections because that would mean that they lack authenticity? Despite the fact that he was almost naked in the jungle, Tarzan was never embarrassed to jump from tree to tree or to socialize with the animals. Although the only education he received was from the orangutans who had adopted him after his parents’ death, he was clear-minded enough to realize that he depended on others as much as on himself for his survival. This is probably the reason why he was attentive to the animals’ needs and willing to help them.

Meeting people and building a network of contacts to stimulate one’s business does not mean exploiting others. Remember that if you give, you will receive. Give yourself the right to strive for your professional goals, but use an indirect way to reach them. Instead of just promoting yourself, show selflessness and dedication. Be friendly and altruistic. If you smile with kindness, listen and try to make yourself useful to others, you will not be seen as a freeloader, or an unpleasant person. Instead, the jungle animals will seek your company and will share their trees with you to facilitate your progress.

Wealth is not only related to your bank account. The greatest wealth you possess remains in your ability to connect and bond with others. Once you have acquired this skill, your network will need to be maintained and activated to create more mutual support, solidarity and, ultimately, more financial wealth.

DO OTHERS KNOW YOU?

One of the most important things in networking, besides knowing people, is whether others know you or not, and how they perceive you. Unfortunately, while building a good reputation requires a lot of effort,

as well as healthy and pleasant connections based on selflessness, honesty and respect, it only takes a few mistakes to create a bad reputation.

.....

My grandfather used to tell me: "The most important thing in life is who you know."

To be honest, although I've heard these words many times in my life, I do not agree.

Knowing all the people of the village is certainly not enough to be successful! Let's say that you know Mr. Brilliant, a successful real estate businessman who invests a lot of money in amateur sport in his city. The point is that you only know him by reputation, while he doesn't know you. So, in order to build a productive connection with him, you must look for an opportunity to meet him.

In other words, those you know matter, provided that they know you too!

Rejean

.....

Simply put, knowing people and being known by those people are of equal value. But this is not enough. In fact, to be appreciated by people is a key element if you want to work with them or progress in the jungle through their network of contacts. The only way to achieve this is by being a friendly, pleasant, selfless, honest and esteemed person. This speaks volumes about the importance of attitude! In this book, we'll share strategies on how to earn people's appreciation.

TARZAN YELL:

**WHAT MATTERS IS THE PEOPLE I KNOW,
THE ONES WHO KNOW ME,
AND WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT ME**

Remember that people focus their attention on the person before buying any product or service. Now who wants to do business with an unpleasant and grumpy person, who's always complaining or pushing others to buy their advisory services, computers or coffee machines? Not many people have the opportunity to offer exclusive products or services and unless this is your case, you will be preferred, first and foremost, for your professionalism, your discipline and your personality.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR CONNECTIONS

A golden rule in networking is to never deal with an unpleasant person, even if they represent great business potential. It's better to stay away from uninteresting, vapid, haughty or rude people with whom you have nothing in common.

You will not necessarily become friends with the people you choose to include in your network, but you'll be happy to mention the ones you appreciate for their hard work, kindness and with whom you maintain good relationships.

Dealing with an unfriendly person could sometimes make you miserable. Moreover, you wouldn't be able to help them progress in the jungle, and that is an essential condition for a healthy connection based on mutual support. In other words, you would end up in an undesirable situation, with a winner and a loser.

Although we are generally free to choose the people we deal with, this principle doesn't always apply when it comes to government services. Even though the lady at the post office that you have been greeting every two weeks for four years does not remember your name, you have no choice but to deal with her in order to send mail and pick up your packages. But would you put yourself in the same awkward situation with your school and/or office supplies provider, your dentist, or the person who's doing your housekeeping?



Tarzan remembers to:

- ❖ develop the ability to bond with others
- ❖ make his voice heard
- ❖ help others
- ❖ build a good reputation for himself
- ❖ carefully select the members of his circle



chapter 3

Build your network one person at a time

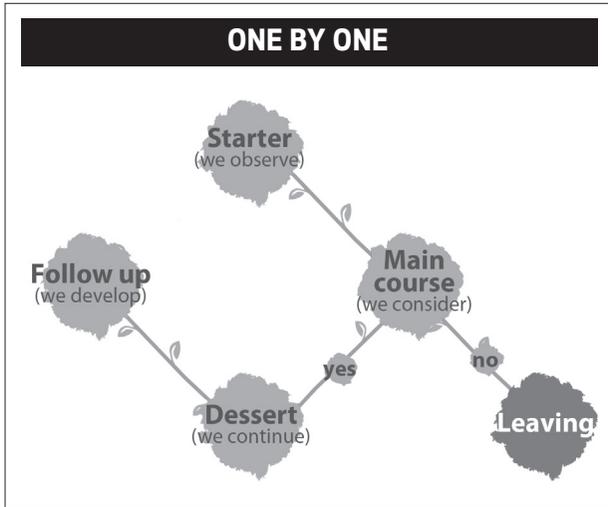
Some people would remain paralyzed at the edge of the jungle, terrified by the false idea of having to face all the animals at once. In fact, a hunter never targets a herd but one animal at a time, and the same goes for networking. Even if the evening gala is crowded, you will meet one person at a time. If you make a nice “catch” from the start, remember that there are other possible encounters to make. If you did well by giving a good impression, it will always be possible to meet that person again.

AN “À LA CARTE” CONVERSATION

Imagine that meeting people is like having dinner at a restaurant, with a number of dishes that you are free to take or not. Will you be impatient to get to the main course if the starter is cold, lacks flavor or is presented without refinement? Imagine a poor salad without vinaigrette or a parmesan fondue on a plate without lettuce or tomatoes to vary the colors... The same applies to a stern-looking man who gives the impression of being in a hurry.

As for you, if you merely say your name without speaking about what distinguishes and occupies you, what you find passionate about your work, or if you seem distracted and not interested in the other person, you shouldn't be surprised if you're pushed to the sidelines. It is hard to attract others if we don't try our best to show ourselves in a good light.

Making new acquaintances during networking activities is an art that consists in successfully conducting a short conversation between two people who wish to promote their respective interests. In a few minutes, you must quickly recognize the relevance of your interlocutor, show yourself in a good light, seem generous and accessible, while lending an attentive ear to the person in front of you.



EVALUATING THE RELEVANCE OF AN ENCOUNTER

If you think that you have a connection with your interlocutor and you sense a potential for doing business with them, you will want to spend a little bit more time with him or her. Figuratively speaking, you would order the main course in their company. At this point, you must analyze the relevance of your meeting in more detail.

If you choose to stay for a chat, i.e. stick around for coffee and dessert after the meal, you have to remain selfless, listen and remain attentive to this person's needs until the end. Always look for a way to be useful to your interlocutor in order to increase the chances of a positive follow-up because this is the ultimate goal of networking: creating the potential for a second

meeting to do business. This is just like parting with a love interest at the end of a first date and saying “We should do this again!”

The more people you meet, the more skilled in evaluating their relevance you become. But you should keep in mind that misunderstandings can happen in a conversation that only lasts a few minutes. Let’s say that Mr. Barcelot seemed funny but not reliable enough to do business with, and for this reason you don’t want to include him in your network, although you need one of his strong trees to progress in the jungle. Later, at another networking event, a friend who doesn’t know that you and Mr. Barcelot have already met introduces him again and mentions that he has a lot of influence in Sapphire Lake, where you want to bring your boats. Chances are, you’ll be kicking yourself for not having taken the time to get to know Mr. Barcelot before deciding that he lacked seriousness.

You may stick to your first impression, and if so, you’ll look for another source of support in your quest. But you may also discover, behind his funny façade, an efficient man who cares about his business and who is able to help you. Giving a second chance can sometimes pay off.

THE APPROACH

Now that you have an overview of the course of the meeting, you have to be well prepared. Choosing the right moment to approach a person is crucial. The perfect moment is when the person is alone and you can be sure that he or she will be grateful to interact. If you manage to find such an opportunity you will have gotten yourself a winning approach.

If the person is already engaged in a conversation, be patient and do not interrupt the exchange. However, if he or she begins to show signs of indifference towards the conversation, get ready to step in. Approach in a discreet way, and if you’re lucky enough, you will be invited to join the conversation. Otherwise, introduce yourself when you’re sure that the time is right. You can notice indifference when, instead of facing their

interlocutor, people turn their shoulders and pelvis away, or if they keep looking elsewhere. However, you should never adopt such an attitude as it may offend your interlocutor.

When introducing yourself, always do so with a smile, direct eye contact and a firm handshake. However, be careful not to sprain the other person's wrist if you have Tarzan's muscles! Conversely, limpness can cause disgust. The right balance is therefore perfect!

THE RIGHT EXPRESSIONS MAKE THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

Many people are intimidated by new encounters and don't know what to say to start or to keep up a conversation. Silence can create an icy atmosphere and make interlocutors even more nervous. This is exactly the kind of situation where one ends up talking about the weather and other irrelevant topics that do not lead to a mutual understanding of each other's needs, and therefore to a productive connection!

To avoid awkward silences during a conversation, it is recommended to prepare some stock phrases. They are a kind of guide in the way to knowing each other and, at the same time, an insurance policy. You can create your own, but here are some useful examples that will help you to better know your interlocutor and their needs. Tip: Open-ended questions, which require more complex answers, are better than closed ones as they allow a more detailed answer.

Stock phrase examples:

-  What field do you specialize in?
-  What region do you work in?
-  Why did you choose this sector?

- What do you like most about your work?
- What are your biggest current challenges?
- Do you have any solutions in mind?

TARZAN YELL:
**I ALWAYS HAVE SOME
STOCK PHRASES IN MIND**

FORMAL OR INFORMAL LANGUAGE?

There is no specific rule when it comes to language. It is mostly a matter of judgment and suitability. In some environments, as in the communication field, or in young and dynamic companies where employees wear jeans and t-shirts, e.g. the video games industry, the general attitude is more likely to be friendly. Formal language may cause an unproductive distance. In contrast, in the insurance or banking industries, which are more conformist, formal language is the norm. The same goes for addressing Europeans, unless you establish friendly relations with them. Introducing yourself with formal language, which cannot be perceived as rude, is the best thing to do. You will then be able to evaluate the situation and adjust your language if necessary.

The context of the meeting also influences the tone. A Chamber of Commerce dinner has a more official nature than an after-work party to celebrate the opening of a new restaurant in town.

Some give only their first name when introducing themselves, to make a difference, to be friendly and to ensure that others remember them. The choice is yours but we suggest you give your interlocutor a hint to remember your name.

“Hello, my name is Rejean, but you know, I didn’t choose it! It’s not my fault! It’s my mother who chose it and today I’m stuck with this name: Rejean!”

There is nothing better than a little humor to lighten the atmosphere and to reinforce the impression that you are approachable and pleasant. However, carefully evaluate the context before carrying the joke a bit too far.

Once you have both introduced yourselves, you’ll have to quickly give your interlocutor the opportunity to talk about himself or herself. But never forget to talk about yourself too! If you listen to someone without ever giving yourself the opportunity to shine, you will just be wasting your time. Most people like to talk about themselves, but if you let them monopolize the entire conversation, they may be grateful to you for being a good listener, but they will not necessarily remember you. How will they know what they can get out of seeing you again if you remain silent? Listening is important, but the listener should lead the discussion and not the other way around.

REDIRECTING A CONVERSATION

What can you do if you come across a pretentious peacock who monopolizes all the attention and has no problem putting you in the shadow of its magnificent plumage? His Lordship keeps talking about himself, his beautiful attire and the way he shines. He tells you his life story starting from his childhood, tells you about his plans for the future, his holidays by a lake, his honeymoon, his fortune and his 12 servants. Are you going to let him talk for hours? Of course not! Remember that attending business dinners is not a hobby for you. You certainly did not come just to admire people’s success. You came to work and to build your own. In these situations, you must redirect the conversation by cleverly slipping in questions and comments:

“You told me you were born at Emerald Lake, am I right? That’s interesting because it’s exactly where I’m looking to expand my company.”

If the gentleman continues to talk about his family at Emerald Lake, his memories and his own projects, take it as a sign to bring the conversation to an end. Indeed, you will never be able to collaborate with someone who’s self-centered to the point where he or she is unable to listen to others.

However, by mentioning your expansion project in the region, there is a greater chance that the gentleman will feel compelled to question you about your company’s mission. Thus, you will get, in a subtle way, the opportunity to talk about yourself.

THE KEY ARGUMENT

When the time comes to introduce yourself, show yourself in your best light. Yes, you have the right to show off your qualities! This is your key argument to give your interlocutor the desire to know you better and eventually doing business with you. Here is what you could say to convince the gentleman that he should focus on you and be attentive to your needs in his best interests:

“My company leases boats for touristic purposes. We operate in 200 different locations throughout the jungle, and Lake Emerald, where you are lucky to be living, shows great potential for our services. Do you know who is involved in the tourism industry in that region of the country?”

With this kind of question, you will be able to analyze the gentleman and determine if he can lend you one of his strong trees to progress in the jungle. Who knows? You may learn that he sits on the Board of Directors of the local chamber of commerce or that his cousin is president of the regional tourism office.

In addition, you will allow that man to know your worth because you'll have been clever enough to add a statistic to the description of your activities (an often used method in marketing). Anti-wrinkle cream advertisements, for example, always mention that 70% or 80% of users have seen their wrinkles decrease after a month. This makes you want to try the cream in question. The same effect occurs when you announce that you rent out boats in 200 different locations throughout the jungle. This way, the other person may get some indication as to the size of your business and the seriousness of your desire to expand.

Be careful however when choosing your statistics. Announcing to your interlocutor who's from Quebec that you have three offices, two in Vancouver and one in Toronto, will not necessarily make him or her want to pursue their interaction with you. Look for the statistic that will make a lasting impression.

TARZAN YELL:

**BEFORE TALKING ABOUT MYSELF,
I SHOULD GET TO KNOW THE OTHER BY
ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

GETTING OUT OF A CONVERSATION

If from the start your interlocutor's manners and attitude dampen your desire to go further, or if his field of activity seems miles away from what may interest you, staying professional is the least you could do. Why would you take the risk of ruining your reputation with inappropriate behavior?

Ending a conversation is also an art. Even if we apparently have only one opportunity to make a good impression, consider that you have two: the way you start and the way you end a conversation. If you miss the first, you can always make it right by seizing the second one. Never forget

that when you leave, you print the last impression, that which is going to last longer, on the other's mind.

Take the example of an evening at a concert. The musicians are late, the show begins with technical issues, the singer dries up on stage and misses a sentence of the song; you are annoyed. During the second part of the show, everyone excels, the public sings along with the band, people get up to dance, the jubilant crowd demands multiple encores; you are blown away. The next day, when you tell your friends about the show, will you linger over the bad start or will you share the excitement of the second part of the concert? You will undoubtedly keep the happy memories of the end in mind. Conversely, if the show had started well and finished in a bad way, you would have kept disappointing memories of your evening in mind.

Now that you have understood the importance of leaving a perfect last impression, here are some tips to leave on a high note.

Pretending to have to call someone, send an email/text message or go to the bathroom are classic and sometimes useful exit doors, but not necessarily the best ones. Pay attention to your words and your actions when using those little lies to avoid being caught! If your phone is held upside down or rings after you pretended to answer an urgent call, you can be sure that you are making a bad impression.

Leaving very quickly, not to say fleeing, as soon as a third person joins the conversation, without even saying goodbye, or looking around for another person to talk with, creates awkwardness. You have probably already faced a similar situation and felt humiliated, as though you were too boring to talk to. Avoid doing to others what you wouldn't want done to you.

Introducing a third person with finesse is sometimes a good way out. However, you should not leave before the conversation is well established between your two interlocutors. For example: "Hello, Mr. Tremblay, happy to see you here. Let me introduce Madame Sauve, she's the

marketing director at Rouge. Ms. Sauve, I seem to remember that you needed something for the company website. Mr. Tremblay is actually a web content producer. I'll let you get acquainted, I must talk to a client that I just saw."

Exchanging business cards, if it has not already been done, is another elegant way to move on.

For example: "Mrs. Sauve, may I ask you for your business card? We could perhaps meet again. It was nice meeting you tonight."

Even if you don't intend to call Mrs. Sauve, she will feel interesting and will be happy to give you her card. You will then leave a favorable impression. As you may meet her again someday and change your mind about her, it's better to stay on good terms.

TARZAN YELL:
**I KNOW THE RIGHT
MOMENT TO ASK FOR A
BUSINESS CARD AND OFFER MINE**

When you leave, you can also tell the truth, but not the whole truth. Not bluntly at least! Here are some examples of what you shouldn't do.

"Ms. Sauve, you have a pretty smile, but I feel like we're not connecting, it would be better if we met other people."

Or...

"Ms. Sauve, since I only have two hours to meet different people tonight, I can't spend them entirely with you, sorry."

Those are two honest sentences, but they are sorely lacking in tact! If someone ever talked to you this way, you would immediately think that they have no social skills. Worse, you would see them as a real brute!

Our networking hero would rather come up with an authentic and respectful way to end a short conversation, whether it was interesting or not: “Ms. Sauve, I was delighted to meet you and, since we are here to network, I suggest that we continue this activity. I won’t monopolize you any longer and will give the others a chance to meet you. Maybe we’ll meet later tonight or, if not, at the next meeting in June. It would be a pleasure.”

If you decide to see the person again, do not forget to ask for their permission to follow up. And keep your word!

Remember that even when the encounter has potential, you must end the conversation after a few minutes to continue your networking. In which case, exchanging business cards is the best option to conclude. Also, be clear about your desire to get back in touch.

IT TAKES TIME TO BUILD A CONNECTION

You cannot consider someone a reliable connection just because you met two or three times at networking events and are connected on LinkedIn. At this point, the budding relationship is still very fragile.

Building a business relationship is a bit like building a couple. It takes time, patience, thoughtfulness and a bit of strategy. You must put yourself in the best light, but without giving yourself away, otherwise you will pay the price later.

During the seduction phase, you have to dedicate time to the other person. If you make a pleasant encounter and wait six months to send an invitation, you won’t be taken seriously! Conversely, if you call the

other person every day, you may seem overwhelming. You must find a balance in order to show interest and create opportunities to meet, but without exerting too much pressure. You have to be attentive, friendly and resourceful. We insist on this last point which will create desire. If you present solutions to someone's difficulties, they will want to keep in touch with you. But, again, pace yourself. Exaggeration could make others feel overwhelmingly indebted, so much so that they might choose to stay away.

Think about how you would feel if you found out one of your son's friends received upwards of \$100-worth of gifts from their parents for birthday, while you're used to spending \$20 to \$25 for this kind of occasion. Feeling that you can't keep up the pace, you might prefer to distance yourself from those parents.

If you have requested and obtained permission to follow up, do what you have to do. However, before inviting someone to a fishing trip, you must at least share other moments with that person. You must exchange e-mails, have lunch together, start to negotiate agreements and to appreciate each other.

You will be able to meet less frequently once you've built a strong connection. Since we all have busy lives, it is not uncommon to meet some of our contacts only once a year. Even if you would like to see each other more often, you must accept that it is sometimes difficult to do so, either because of family responsibilities or an important workload. However, despite the unpredictability of life, make it your duty to meet the people who matter to you at least once a year, and if possible, meet with several of them at once to save time. Suggest a girls' lunch with Emmanuelle and Marilou and introduce them to Annie at the same time. You will then maintain your network while helping your friends expand theirs.



Tarzan remembers to:

- ❖ wait for the right moment to strike up a conversation
- ❖ ask open-ended questions to get to know the other person
- ❖ evaluate the relevance of his encounters
- ❖ leave a favorable last impression
- ❖ plan a follow-up when he meets someone with good potential
- ❖ dedicate time and energy to building strong connections

Like Tarzan, who stands out because he knows how to communicate with all species of the jungle, successful people are those who have developed excellent skills to create lasting, friendly and mutually beneficial relationships. Their secret? Networking. A powerful tool that goes far beyond the exchange of business cards.

Entrepreneur and high-level networker Rejean Gauthier has developed a simple and effective method to help you establish this type of relationship with your current contacts and to significantly expand your network. In this book, he unveils strategies you can use to get closer to the people likely to propel you to success. How can I reach out to others and make new contacts? How can I target high-potential relationships? How do I maintain these relationships? What are the best ways to take care of my network? He responds concretely to all these questions, explaining in particular how to become an active listener and a master of follow-up thanks to the new tool that is the RG Scale. In addition to clear advice and an effective approach, this book features testimonials from business people and students about how networking has changed their lives.

Whether you are an entrepreneur, a professional, a manager or a self-employed worker, enter the networking jungle and wake up the Tarzan or Jane inside you!



Rejean Gauthier is a serial entrepreneur. Having graduated twice from the "Dale Carnegie Training" international program, he is passionate about selling, networking, the world of business and especially about the human being. Since 2014, he has shared his knowledge by acting as trainer for students from Laval University entrepreneurship Laval program.

Professional, dynamic and organized, this author, trainer and speaker takes advantage of his involvement in several networks of business people to share his passion for business and networking.