

David Burkus: If your goal is you're just trying to meet more and more people, that's not going to be effective as understanding. There's a lot of potential value in your existing network that you're ignoring.

Bob Glazer: I'm Bob Glazer, host of Outperform, a podcast about people and companies who are outperforming in business and in life, what they're doing, challenges they've faced and what they've learned along the way. I talk to industry leaders, company founders, entrepreneurs, experts and big thinkers about what it takes to perform at a high level and build capacity in life, business and marketing partnerships.

Welcome to the Outperform Podcast. Today's quote is from Robert Kiyosaki, and that is: "The richest people in the world look for and build networks. Everyone else looks for work."

It's a great intro for our guest today, David Burkus, who knows a lot about building networks. He is the author of several books, including Friend of a Friend, Understanding the Hidden Networks that Can Transform Your Life and Your Career. In addition to being a best-selling author, David is also an award-winning podcaster, a regular contributor to Harvard Business Review, and an associate professor of Management at Oral Roberts University, where he teaches courses on creativity, innovation, leadership, and organizational behavior.

Welcome, David. It's great to have you on Outperform.

David Burkus: No. Thank you so much for having me. I'm a little embarrassed, I'm not familiar with that quote, but I love it.

Bob Glazer: It's a good one. I know his work really well.

David Burkus: Yeah. I know a lot of Kiyosaki stuff, but I was like, "That's new." Huh, man, I wish I would have known that two years ago when I was starting the proposal for the book. Oh, well.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. I used a lot of quotes in my book. Yeah. That's a great place to start. There'd been a lot of books on networking over the years, including some timeless classics such How to Make Friends and Influence People-- How to Win Friends and Influence People, I think it is, and Keith Ferrazzi's Never Eat Alone, which is a book I read years ago and really informative for me.

Your new book Friend of a Friend offers readers really interesting and different perspective on how to grow their networks and build key connections. Before we dive in, I'd love to hear more

about what got you into this topic and particularly into this angle of the topic.

David Burkus: Yeah. Difference is a good word. Hopefully, it's not just different, but better. But different is a good word. I mean, I love, I still have a copy of my, my wife actually, who is an ER doctor, that barely rarely reads non-fiction, tells people to read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and lots of other these books, but they all are sort of, I describe them as networking advice books.

When I was writing my two prior books, both times I ended up borrowing some works and some research that was fascinating from professors who studied network science, people like Brian Uzzi, Jarrett Spiro, Duncan Watts, names you'll know by the end of the book and by the end of a podcast, but people doing fascinating stuff, studying the connections that people make in between other people. As I'm reading all of that, I'm going, "Okay. Well, some of these is right in line with the advice books, some of it contradicts it. But why aren't we talking more about this instead of just one or two people's advice on how to work a room or how to give the perfect elevator pitch, that sort of thing?"

The advice books are great but unless you're similar to that person, then the advice is going to be a little bit hard to apply. The big idea was kind of like, "All right. I'm reading these studies. I'm understanding how networks actually work." Maybe there needs to be a book on networking that is not advice. It is, here's how the network around you already operates, and then you can go figure out how to put it into practice and develop your own advice, because now you know how networks work and you can know how to navigate it. That became the big idea for *Friend of a Friend*.

Bob Glazer: So it's more of really being clear, here are the rules of the game, not understanding how the game is played or how it plays out. Here are the rules, and now with that, you can think about how to do this in a more intelligent way.

David Burkus: Exactly right. Some of it is sort of reframe. One of the things I love to say about it is how we use the wrong language, some of us will say, "Okay. here's how to grow your network." You can't grow your network. You don't have a network. You exist inside of one. So the only logical thing is to figure out how to navigate that network, figure out the rules of how it works, and then you can start playing really well.

Bob Glazer: What are the traditional assumptions of networking that your research proved either incorrect or misunderstood, or any of the above?

David Burkus: Yeah. One of the biggest, I would say, misconceptions, and it's one of those ones that no one would outright say but we all realize a lot of advice is shaped in this. First of all, there's no scoreboard to run up. Like when we describe people who have great networks or are great networkers, we're usually describing them in terms of size. You see this now in sort of an online capacity, right? Not a week goes by that I don't get a LinkedIn request from someone who's bragging about how many connections they have on LinkedIn. I love their posture of openness, but the goal is not to run up the scoreboard. It's not get a fatter ro--, I mean, whatever the virtual equivalent of a rolodex is anymore.

You'll hear people say bigger is not better, but I still think we're kind of doing that. We're acting like the goal is to meet lots and lots of new people to add them in. We wanna create value, which is true. But again, if your goal is you're just trying to meet more and more people, that's not going to be as effective as understanding ... There's a lot of potential value in your existing network that you're ignoring. We talk about it in a bit in the book in sort of weak and dormant ties, but also those people that are one introduction away.

Actually, for the introverts that might be listening to this, what I love about this is when you flip from, okay, it's just about meeting as many people and running a score to it's about understand who I'm already connected to, who I might be neglecting, who's hidden from me because they're one introduction away. That's a whole lot more doable for every average person to just treat people like they're your friends and they're ready to introduce you to new friends and navigate that network. It's a whole lot more comfortable than figuring out how is the perfect way to introduce someone and exchange business cards and all that stuff that most of us don't wanna do anyway.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. Before we go into going into some specific questions about some stuff in the book, but why is it important for people to understand how to build a network in 2018? I mean, is it even an option for people not to build one anymore?

David Burkus: I think it's important for people to understand the network they're already swimming in. Whatever industry you're trying to make an impact in, whatever company you already work for, whether it is a formal network or an informal one, there is already community of people that are connected to each other. Some people gravitate towards the center and kind of are keeping the gravitational pull, other people are out on the fringes, and some are even they're looking at it as their job as connecting one community to another. You need to know what's going on in that capacity.

Sociologists have a term they use. They call it "social capital." The value of the network or the potential value in that network that can be added to or extracted. You need to pay attention to those sort of things because ... I mean, it's weird. In a digital age, maybe they should have gotten less important, but it actually got more. Who you know really does matter. Your network really is your net worth. We're even using economic terms like "social capital" to describe that phenomenon now.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. My friends said, I don't know where he got it from, but he'll probably take credit, but he said to me years ago, there was a great formula he said, he thought success was what you know raised to the who you know. I really haven't heard that again, but it's an interesting formula. Have you come across that?

David Burkus: I haven't. I kind of admonished people with a little bit of different take on it and I'm going to take credit for it, which is not necessarily who you know, it's who knows what you know. What you know still matters, but it's useless unless other people know that you know it.

Bob Glazer: Right. If your brilliant theory that you sit in your closet by itself it's just not going to get a lot of practical application.

David Burkus: Exactly right. Emily Dickinson is probably the one exception to the rule of people that can be ... They're still in the fringes their entire life and then somehow make an impact. Most of us realized, okay, in order to kind of do this, I'm going to need to figure out: a, who can I share this work with; but also who can I partner with; and then who can kind of amplify that message. All of these things are important. And the network is already built. You're not starting from scratch just trying to meet as many people as possible. You're just trying to understand the social capital and the network that you already have.

Bob Glazer: So with that in mind, it's a great segue, what are some of the unexpected secrets that people can and should leverage to grow their networks or take advantage, as you said the networks that are already there?

David Burkus: There's probably two that surprised me the most when you're looking at the network that you already operate in. The first is this phenomenon. It's the fancy, or actually both are fancy words, but the first fancy word is multi-flexity, which is a term they use in network science to describe the different context for connection that people have. Most of us will put kind of work context in one bucket, and then personal friends in another bucket, and then community friends like we see each other at our kids' softball practice in another bucket. We tend to kind of segment that out.

When network science is studying their community, they don't. They actually make the record of how many different context per connection are there. They use two terms. The uniflex tie will be like, we only see each other at work or we only see each other at the gym, we only know each other that well. In multiflex tie is new. We work together, we go to the gym together, our kids are in the same public school together, we have all these different reasons to connect and context for connections.

You find out you build a deeper relationship faster with someone when you do that. But you also find out that work bleeds over into personal life, personal life bleeds over into business life. There's a much better approach to understanding the value in the network around you if you realize that all these things can bleed over. So don't be putting them in buckets. I'd like to say they're not work friends and real friends. Everybody is a friend or a potential friend, right? So treat them that way and you can create a lot more value and also extract that more value.

The other kind of fancy word is the word called "homophily." I know it's a word, we're going deep and fancy nerd words here.

Bob Glazer: You could be making up words, I don't know.

David Burkus: Yeah. I'm not. What's interesting about homophily, this comes from the Greek meaning love of same. This is the birds of a feather flock together thing.

Bob Glazer: Yeah.

David Burkus: What we found is that it's not mostly an ingrown tendency to only be around like. Most of us know we need diversity in our network. We know we need opinions from lots of different angles. We know we need information from a lot of different sources and yet the network has a tendency to organically serve us people that are self-similar.

So if you're not being proactive and intentional about seeking out different sources of information in different context, the networks just kind of naturally serve you people that are already like you and you can end up being in an echo chamber without even realizing it.

Not only does that underscore the idea that you really need to be paying attention to this network that's around you, there's also some sort of intentional things you need to be doing. Because if you just allow these things to happen naturally, you'll naturally you put people into different buckets when everybody should be bleeding over, and will naturally be connecting with

people that are self-similar, who are not the people you need to really grown and make better decisions, take your business to the next level, advance your career, whatever it is.

Bob Glazer: A great example of, I think the formula there is, if you think about trying to find a job. Unfortunately, that's when people start networking. I always get this request, then it's like ... I'm sure there's advice you have on this ... This goes a little to somewhat Keith Ferrazzi's stuff, but you know, you don't reach out to people when you need something about all the ways that they can help you. But when people are looking for a job, and that's business context, I bet they find as much success in their personal rolodex with people making recommendations than they probably do in their business rolodex or network.

David Burkus: Yeah. That's exactly right. It's funny, business history is full of these examples, right? One of my favorites is Ben and Jerry. Ben and Jerry were high school friends. They became friends because they were both the, well, to be blunt, they were both the fattest and slowest kids in gym class, and so they were walking the track when everyone else is running it, and they got friendly. It took years, but eventually that friendship turned into a business partnership.

One of my favorite examples is a mutual friend of ours, a Heleo thinker from the bar, is Whitney Johnson, who got one of her most pivotal jobs managing a private equity firm that was started by Clay Christensen. Not because Clay was familiar with all of her work in Wall Street and in investment analysts and all that sort of stuff, but because they went to church together and served on a committee. Clay saw, "Wow. You run this committee of volunteers. You're a really good leader. I want you running my company." So he was the one that thought to flip over.

It happens all the time and it can have some really, really powerful impacts, if you're open to it. But a lot of us aren't. A lot of us put people into different buckets and we don't want that kind of integration. I don't know if this is because we want work-life balance or whatever it is, but the world just doesn't work that way.

Bob Glazer: So you talked about the theory of these buckets, but what are some actual ways that people need to do to break down these buckets that they may not even know exist? Is this in terms of how they think or how they organize their network or how they track it? How do you put that into practice?

David Burkus: How you organize and track it will flow from how you think. But the biggest thing is just how you get to know people. If you think about you're making a new connection or someone's introducing

you to someone, if you're in a work context, what's the most likely question that you ask?

Bob Glazer: Something business.

David Burkus: Right. You ask, "So what do you do?" or what have you. Which is an invitation to keep the conversation sort of business-oriented. We may, after, let's say we spent 20 minutes talking together, we may spend about two bleeding over into like, "Are you married? Do you have kids?" Or whatever, but we don't sort of spend a lot of that time.

I coach a lot of people, if you're meeting in a work context, the conversation will drift back to work. So maybe start with something non-work asking "Where did you grow up?". I actually want to ask people when I meet them, "What excites you right now?", which is a great open-ended question. You can tell me about a work project, if that's the most exciting for you in your life, you can tell me that your kids just got back from camp, if that's the most exciting thing in your life, or just going to camp, that would be the exciting thing.

So you kind of ask these more broad questions. I think you flip the same way with personal life. Most of us know shockingly little about the day-to-day that our friends do. Then only if that person has sort of met with unexpected unemployment or something like that do we start to learn a bit because now we wanna help them. Well, we'd go better if we start asking our real friends, our personal friends, a little more work-related questions, not prying, but we wanna know, we wanna pay attention to it. Humans are multi-faceted creatures and so we need to be multi-fascinated with many different angles with them.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. That's really interesting. I think in your business example, the quicker you get to sort of personal commonality the deeper that relationship goes. You're talking to someone, you find out, oh, they love to ski in autumn, they have three kids the same ... It actually, it brings a lot more connection. Even though you're in the business context, you're still two people that are connecting. I would think that the more you found out you have in common outside of work maybe the more that brought you together a little bit.

David Burkus: Yes. Not only in the spur of the moment, but what a lot of researches would call "uncommon commonalities." You both find out that you go to the same beach community for vacation, or you both ski in the same place, et cetera. You build a deeper connection quicker in the moment, but you also have more reasons to follow up with that connection. So you build the

stronger, longer, lasting connection too because if you only know their work type of stuff then you're going to send them that generic congrats on your work anniversary thing that LinkedIn encourage you to send them.

Instead of knowing like, "Hey. You know what? Ski season is beginning. Have you gotten your lift tickets yet?", or something like that, which is much more welcome attempt to reconnect with someone.

Bob Glazer: I should you tell you a story on that. This weekend I was editing an old non-profit job description. I had a lot of job to take advantage of LinkedIn's new thing where it combines multiple positions into one. I just haven't cleaned it up in a while. So I was cleaning it up and I picked do not send me updates. Somehow in doing this it changed something on my title. This is a non-profit I've been involved with for years. It put out some notifications that I have some new role but you if I went through it, it had nothing different. I got like 95 messages on LinkedIn congratulating me on a new role. I'm like, people didn't even look.

David Burkus: Yeah.

Bob Glazer: I actually was going to disconnect from all of those people because I looked back and some of them had only over the years for oral updates, sent me like their chat bot did. I was like, I should delink all of these people who are congratulating me on my new job that I don't actually have.

David Burkus: Yeah. I'm zooming in the exact same thing right now because it's fall, which means, I work on a university schedule, I've got an appointment, which means every fall I get "Congrats on your work anniversary." What's amazing to me is, for the last couple of years, you don't even type that, you click a button and it sends it to me. But then I can click a button that says "Thank you" or "Thanks so much. I appreciate it," or whatever. You have, literally, it's not even two people talking. The idea is that you're supposed to be, Keith Ferrazzi calls it "pinging," you're reaching back to a dormant connection.

But in reality, it's my chat bot and your chat bot talking. None of us are actually communicating, right? You get these new ones and then you look in the history of our conversation that it's, literally, we have that exact same conversation once a year and then nothing else.

Bob Glazer: It's time to go. Someone told me once that, this woman told me that she and her husband have chat bot that checks in on each

other out. It was actually ridiculous. It says, "How are you doing?" And then his response to hers. I'm like, I don't totally understand that.

We're in a client service business and one of things that we try to train on is just even when people get on a call, it's a person, so you're in a business. But if you just jump right into business, you're setting that tone. If you ask an open-ended question to a client, how is your weekend? They might go, "Oh, my sister got engaged. I'm the maid of honor." "Well, congrats. I'm getting married this year." Conversely, "Oh, my cat died this weekend," or something like that where you find that they were kind of in a bad mood and you thought it was something you did.

So asking these open-ended questions and not jumping right into business is just helpful I think in terms of managing these relationships in general.

David Burkus: Totally. I say it often, humans are multi-faceted so you've got to be multi-fascinated.

Bob Glazer: Absolutely. Talk a little bit about the majority illusion and what it is. I think it gets on one of the core principles that we're talking about here as well.

David Burkus: Yeah. This is really interesting, especially for marketing angle. This would be the types of clients that you're bringing on and something that's going to be really interesting to them. It's one of those things that sometimes marketers sort of knew but then we actually have the science behind why this works.

In short, the majority illusion is the ability to navigate a network such that you or a product, or a book, or an album looks really, really popular when in reality not even the majority of people are talking about it. The way that this works is that everyone in the networking, a community has a different number of connections. It doesn't follow an average, like a normal distribution of inverted U. It follows a power law on 80/20. Right?

There are some people that have 10x the number of connections and people following them, et cetera, that most people do. If you can begin to build relationships with those people and kind of target those people. If those few people are the ones who were talking about a product, a service, a person, whatever it is, you can look dramatically more popular that you've penetrated a market much more than if you actually have.

In the book, we talked about, actually the first person that I ever knew that sort of did this and admitted it, which was the writer

and podcaster Tim Ferris, when he launched his first book. When Tim sold vitamins via sort of paid traffic to a random vitamin website and then he actually wrote a book bragging about how he was so not involved in the business. When you're trying to not be involved in the business you don't build a brand around that.

So then he realizes, okay, I need to build personal brand. He spends two or three years building relationships with all of the people that influenced 18- to 35-year-old tech savvy males. It's the only group that he cares about. So he's going to tech conferences, he's making relationships with tech bloggers and journalists, and what have you.

When it comes time for the book to come out, those sources are talking about him. Now I fell on that demographic so I heard about him almost immediately. But some people are like, "Who is this person?" Until suddenly he has a television show and a New York Times best-seller and he gets bigger.

But he only got there because he started with this one little demographic, this one little vertical and he mapped the network of who are the people that are influential, that everybody is following, those are who I need to build relationships with. I think another key is that he did it over two years. He's not just spamming those people, right?

Bob Glazer: Yeah.

David Burkus: He's paying attention to who those influencers are and knowing, okay, if I can navigate this network properly, I can get to critical mass much faster than it would take one-to-one marketing.

Bob Glazer: Technology, you hear about influencer marketing these days. I assume technology is helping to do this, right? Helping to map and point out how are the voices that matter for certain things and have some matter more than others. Have you looked much into the klout score how accurate technology is in doing this?

David Burkus: It's interesting, technology makes it easier and also worse. I was literally just chatting with someone today about the problem that we're not talking a lot about right now, which is the problem of Instagram. That it is actually really easy to build a huge follower in Instagram by posting sort of motivational pictures and encouraging other people to tag, and then you can't get those people to take any action. A lot of people have these sort of inflated, and we've known about fake Twitter followers and that kind of stuff for years, so that it could become possible to kind of hide it. That's what I like about where Tim went. I mean,

he's targeting tech savvy males but he's building real relationships with these people.

What I often like to say is that technology is a supplement tool, not a replacement for your existing face-to-face in real-life network. I mean, you can try and build all sorts of influential partnerships, but you've got to take the time to really get to know those people if you are going to: a, agree on what they're following is authentic; but, b, get to the point where they're invested enough to want to help you as well because you've helped them in the past.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. I assume you subscribe, to the last you said, when you're approaching people, what can you do for them, how can you add before you take?

David Burkus: Yeah. I think we tend to sort of ... What's weird about that advice is we tend to then get into that what Adam Grant would call a "matcher." Right? We're, "Okay, I did this, I did that," whatever. I think that's a bad approach. I think this is again where I go back to the idea of the network as a whole in building social capital. I think this is found anecdotally. I don't have a lot of data for this, except my own experiences. But I found if you pay attention to the network as a whole. So it's not that I have to make sure that I am creating value for Bob first before I ask a favor for me. But I do have to know that, okay, the network as a whole, the community as a whole sees me as somebody that's investing in the community that's being a giver, that's always being generous with connections and introductions and those sort of things before I ask for it.

It may not be that exact person you've done a favor for, but if that person is watching you provide value to other people, then there's still that ability to subtract. So it's the overall social capital, not the kind of individual nature.

That's one thing that technology has helped because it's made our efforts at building social capital far more visible.

Bob Glazer: So just being known as a giver, but as viewed by other people rather than you're kind of score keeping with each individual person in your network?

David Burkus: Exactly right. That's not new advice. I didn't invent that. The only thing I am adding to it is the idea that when you think about it as a whole network, it's much more important to know what your account balance in social capital and the whole network is. Not only because that's kind of more effective, but also because when you just take the provide value approach, you can kind of

end up getting frustrated with someone because you feel like you provided value and didn't do whatever. It just gets weird. So take care of the network and trust that the network will take care of you.

Bob Glazer: You really look at it almost as this living organism in that sort of view, right?

David Burkus: It kind of is. When you dive into it, it gets a little weird and so I don't often go down this path. But when you dive into some of the writings of network scientists, people like Duncan Watts and Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, et cetera, they've kind of described it as this overall sort of organism. The way that you would study an ant hill or something like that. Humans, we operate in predictable patterns, we circle around each other, and networks even operate in predictable patterns, which is fascinating. It's kind of downer for those of us that believe in free will. But it is fascinating.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. All right. We'll be right back after a quick commercial from our sponsor with David Burkus.

Adam Grant: Hi, I'm Adam Grant. As a working psychologist, I've spent most of my career studying two big questions. How do we unlock original thinking and build cultures of productive generosity? With those questions in mind, I recently co-founded a pretty extraordinary community dedicated to discovering groundbreaking ideas while trying to make the world a better place. It's called the Next Big Idea Club.

Together, my friends Malcolm Gladwell, Susan Cain, Dan Pink and I searched far and wide for the eight most original, most essential non-fiction books of the year, and we send them straight to you. We also interviewed the authors and we send you the key insights across video, audio and text formats.

Remember this is a book club. So when you join the exclusive online forum, you get the chance to discuss every season's selections, not just with other members, but also with me, Malcolm, Susan and Dan.

Bob Glazer: Get insider insights from Dan Pink, Malcolm Gladwell, Susan Kane and Adam Grant and sign up for the Next Big Idea Club today at www.nextbigideclub.com/10off and get 10% off your subscription.

All right. Welcome back. So, David, we were talking about networks and the degrees for personal and professional. Another thing that you talked about in the book that I'd love to hear

more on is sort of weaker or former contacts and how they're often overlooked but can really be the most helpful to someone in their networking. Can you talk a little bit about that?

David Burkus: Yeah, absolutely. This is kind of in the ... in the subtitle, we used this term "the hidden networks" that can transform your life and career. What we mean by hidden, they're kind of just the neglected. If the mental model is that the goal is to run up the score and meet lots of new people, then you are neglecting people that you already know but don't know that well. Or that you know but you haven't talked to in a while.

In network science, there's two different terms for these. The first is weak ties. These are the people you know but you don't know that well. Maybe worked together but you only see each other when there's cake in the break room, something like that. Or hummus, if you're the health type of person; for me, it's cake. Then, there are your dormant ties. These are people that you knew and almost knew closely, right? You went to college together or you worked together in the same company, but then one of you moved on, changed jobs, changed city, just sort of fell out of touch.

What we find is that those people, if you think, again think about it is a whole network, not just your network, but one big kind of three-dimensional. I'd like to say we all live in one network 7.4 billion people strong and counting and then we all sort occupy these nooks and crannies of it based on industry. If you think about it that way, those weak and dormant ties are usually somewhere else in the network.

The people that you see everyday, they see those same people everyday. They are getting information from the same sources everyday. They're very self-similar to you. If you need diverse source of information, if you need job opportunity, connections, if you need to just know what's going on in the part of the world that you're not all that familiar with, those are going to come from your weaker or dormant ties.

You kind of alluded to this earlier when you were talking about, okay, somebody goes on a job hunt and now all of a sudden they're reaching back out to their weak ... We know we do that when we're desperate for a job. What we don't know is that it's kind of too late because now, I mean, there's no social capital left in that account. We haven't talked to them, and now we know, we can almost smell the desperation on those people. I mean, you want to help, but you're kind of like, "I don't know anything about you other than your resume."

So what I coach a lot of people to do is that these weak and dormant ties are people that you wanna be in a regular pattern of reaching back out. That pattern can be once a year, preferably not on one of their work anniversaries through LinkedIn. Or it can be sooner than that. This can actually be an area where social media and technology becomes really valuable. The question is: what do you do with it? Right?

If people are broadcasting information about themselves and their career on LinkedIn or their personal life on Facebook, Twitter, or what have you, it's a really good opportunity to take note of something that's said, "Hey, I noticed that you're going on a vacation for the weekend in Chicago. I just thought you'd wanna know that skip everything but Lou Malnati's because the rest of the pizza places are terrible."

I mean, you can say that through a more personal medium than just leaving a comment on their Facebook status. Send them an email, send them a text message, a phone call, whatever works for you, and then you check back in with that person. It can be as brief as that, 30 seconds.

Now if you're making a point to kind of be intentional with those relationships, then do it every six, nine, 12 months. Now when there actually is a reason for them to reach out to you because they need help or for you to reach out to them because you need help or information, now it's just one more in a series of conversations.

These weak and dormant ties are your most powerful sources of information, but you have to make sure that the line is open to receive that information.

Bob Glazer: So I'm curious, I don't know how much you wanna get into the tactical, but in terms of like this, what do you suggest that people use to track or map this? Should they keep a spreadsheet or they use something like Contactually? How do they actually apply some of these things when they think about their network and try to actually look at who haven't I talked to in a while, who have I talked to?

David Burkus: Yeah. Depending on the size of your network, how ... I didn't wanna say your network, but depending on the size of the connections that you have, and what have you, there's different tools that can help with big numbers. Contactually is one. There's another newer one called Levitate, that is kind of cool too. They're both great. I've played around with both. A spreadsheet is fine too.

For most of us though, honestly, one of the things I find most interesting is you can get on a tool like Facebook or LinkedIn and you can actually sort your connections by most frequently contacted, which means that the people at the bottom of that list would be the ones that you haven't talked to in forever. What I've found really interesting is, I've been trying to practice what I preach since I was doing all the research and writing, and so I've been a Contactually user for probably 18 months, two years now and everyday at 8 a.m. I get emails that says I have no action items.

Bob Glazer: Yeah.

David Burkus: Why is that? It's because I've gotten in the habit of when I see something that someone else is broadcasting about their life that warrants a like or a comment, I take the 30 seconds to give that, but in a more personal medium that generates a conversation - so an email, a text, a phone call, what have you. Or this is what I think, this happens to all of us at least once a week, you're just walking down the street or you're just sitting kind of spacing out and somebody pops into your head, some memory from college or someone from past job or whatever. Someone pops in your head, take the 15 seconds to send them an email or text message or what have you.

It's weird we always think, "Oh, what do I say when I'm reaching back out to a weaker or dormant tie?" But every time I've ever received a message that said, "Hey, I don't know how you're doing, but I was thinking about you today and this memory, because it popped into my head. I hope all is well. Would love to connect sometime soon." We like to receive those messages. We like to know that other people are thinking about us.

Bob Glazer: Other than congrats on your work anniversary.

David Burkus: On your work anniversary, right. So you can get into those two habits. Honestly, the software becomes not that valuable because for most of us we've got a community of contacts that just getting into those habits will make sure you're checking with them frequently enough. If you need to outsource and things like that, they're there and they're great. But habits kind of work better than those systems.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. But you wanna find something where ... I found that having something in front of you or seeing it causes action. Verne Harnish I think the one I first heard years ago talked about it when he was building YEO and the importance of having a relationship dashboard. But what were the 30 most important relationships to the success of his business that was going to be, and he looked at those every morning and it brought him new

ideas or opportunities to reach out. That's something that I have incorporated in part of what I do and I found it to be really powerful. Because just, "Oh, David. I haven't thought about David in a while. I should call David." You need some sort of trigger, right?

David Burkus: Yeah, absolutely. I think what's interesting is that all of us are kind of so connected to a lot of these tools now that it can be the trigger. You're exactly right. Especially, and I hate to do this because I just talked about not bucketing people into work and personal, but especially on client side or partnership side, those work relationships, like Verne is kind of getting at, those people that are beneficial to you building your career or your business, you may need something to keep them in mind because you're probably not seeing pictures of their kids on Facebook. It's not that personal relationship yet so you probably do need that kind of system.

But if you're a crazy person like me and you blur those relationships and you just wanna be Facebook friends with everyone you know in real life and what have you, it kind of gets easier to do it as a habit instead of building those systems.

I mean, [inaudible 00:32:36] and the whole team, and Contactually, I love their product, Levitate is also great. So whichever one can be your dashboard, if that's what you need in your life, do it. As you're doing it, I would also encourage you to build habits so that eventually you don't even have to look at the dashboard, you're just doing it instinctively.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. For those of you that don't know that genre product, it's sort of like a personal CRM system, like a salesforce would be for business. It's for managing your personal contacts and the systems would let you know if you emailed someone. It helps you to be using green, yellow, red, to who you've been in touch with and who you haven't.

David Burkus: Yeah. I think they work even better than something like a spreadsheet because they track your actual, like you can plug in your email software and your social media, and they can track what you're actually doing. Instead of where you're just thinking like, "Oh, well, Excel will work fine keeping track and taking the time to type in every single record of every single communication." That just gets cumbersome.

Bob Glazer: Yeah, absolutely. So you actually wrote an interesting article in Harvard Business Review entitled Making Time for Networking as a Working Parent, which is a topic that we talk about a lot at our company. As a working parent myself, I relate to this, about how networking often seems to happen during the after hours,

activity after work, drinks, weekend off sites, conferences, all of which you can take away from family. I mean, I could go to three times conferences, I could stay up all night. I know I meet more people, but then I'd be a disaster the next day.

So one of the tips that you offer for people in this world, I think, is the press pause on making new contacts. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

David Burkus: Yeah. I think this ties kind of to that idea of weak and dormant ties. Right? I should say I'm making an assumption here. That when I say a working parent that also means that you've been working for a while and you've been a parent for a while.

Bob Glazer: Right.

David Burkus: I mean, I'm making the assumption that if you are a parent and a working parent, you've got a couple of years of career in your belt, and so you probably already got a lot of connections that you're neglecting. I neglected pretty much everyone when my kids were less than a year old.

Bob Glazer: Yeah.

David Burkus: Other than maybe in-laws who came to watch them every once in a while. That was it. So a lot of us, again if we're thinking about networking as I have to be running up the scoreboard, I have to be meeting the people, I have to go hitting that cocktail out at the conference and staying out late by the fire pit, et cetera, because I have to meet all of these new people. That's what we're saying press pause.

Just give yourself permission to like, okay, we already know that weak and dormant ties are going to be as powerful, if not more powerful than these new connections. So maybe if I press pause in doing all of that and instead as I'm going up to my room at that conference to go to bed at a decent hour, if I send a couple messages before I go to bed, that's probably going to be as effective for you as making all of those new connections into one or two that you can help or that they can help you.

It's about giving yourself permission to like, I don't need to be running up the score right now. What I need to be doing is keeping in touch with all of the contacts that I've already built in my career. Because when I have additional time to start meeting people, it's probably going to be through referrals and introductions from these people anyway.

But more importantly, just like strangers, these people are elsewhere in the network with new information, new ideas, new potential lead sources. So they're just as valuable as those strangers would be. So why bother spending the extra time when I can just as easily rekindle those existing relationships and I don't have to be at the hotel bar until 9 o'clock at night to do that?

Bob Glazer: Yeah. This goes to sort of age-old sales and marketing fight, right? There's no point continuing to fill up a bucket from the top that's leaking in the bottom. You do stay up to that bar till 3 a.m. and you have 12 new cards and you have no time to remember to write anything to them that would make you remember them. It's not likely that those contacts are going to prove valuable to you in any way.

David Burkus: Right. Exactly right. Especially, I mean, you can almost see it in the data. They're not going to be more valuable than some of those weak and dormant ties that you've been neglecting. So spend your time reaching back out to them and those are people that it doesn't take as much as time to reconnect with. A simple 30 second email that you can fire off will spark a conversation a couple days later. That's a much better use of your time.

Bob Glazer: Is there some science around when you're building and growing your network? What are the best practices around the first impression or activating sort of someone who's new to your network?

David Burkus: Where I would say there's science around this is, you've probably heard the old analogy, the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon or Six Degrees of Inspiration, those sort of things. That idea that, okay, 7.4 billion people in the world and we're all connected by six introductions. First of all, it actually is kind of true. The weird thing is with Facebook account, it's actually 4.2 introductions. I don't know how you have 0.2 of a person, but, hey, whatever, it's average.

Bob Glazer: Well, most people want two and a half kids, so that's sort of the same.

David Burkus: Well, there you go. Yeah, yeah, that sounds perfect. What's interesting to me, I'm more interested in one and two degrees. If you think about this statistically, the sheer number of people, that the whole world is connected by six. The sheer number of people who are one and two. I recommend to a lot of people, you need to be meeting far more people through introductions, referrals, connections than you're meeting through strangers. Not only is it a warmer connection, but the numbers are there to where there's not really a reason ...

I'll go ahead and out and say it, if you feel uncomfortable with those kind of mixers and cocktail parties and whatever, and you don't like working the room, you don't ever have to. Even if you do love doing that, you still probably will be seeking to make connections to people through others because it's going to be a deeper connection, faster. You're going to build rapport faster. But also the numbers are there to support the idea that working that is a far better approach.

So even when you start out, I encourage a lot of people to be regularly asking the question, who do you know in blank - with blank being the city or the industry or the company that you wanna get to know more people in. When those people start giving you list of names and you start hearing the same few names, that's a really good indicator that that is the person you should meet but also that's a really good indicator that, wow, there is a wealth of new connections to be made, just one degree of separation away from me.

Bob Glazer: That's really great advice. So I'm curious, as the last question, what is the networking mistake that you've made, that you've learned most from?

David Burkus: Oh, man. Not doing the double opt-in introduction. I'll give you what that is in a second. But when I was young and dumb early in my career, as a writer, especially, I was really eager to kind of get network into the community of other writers and literary agents and publishers in this business book world. So I have a good friend of mine who wrote a book, I won't call him out because it would only actually make me guilty, he's perfectly innocent. He wrote a book I really loved, I'm talking to this other person who really wants to meet him. "Oh, perfect. I'll just introduce you." I pulled out my phone and I connected the two of them.

He sent a very nice reply back to this person. But then he sent a singular reply back to me and basically said, "Dude, not cool. Please don't give out my personal contact information without checking me first." It was a couple weeks after that that I stumbled across a couple of different articles about what people are referring to as the double opt-in introduction.

Double opt-in just like in sort of email marketing where you wanna make extra sure that this person wants to be a part of your newsletter or what have you. The idea is that when that moment occurred and Person A really wanted to meet Person B, my fellow writer friend, what I should have done is said, "Okay. Let me go check with B and I'll get back with you with the connection if it's beneficial," and then go to B and say, "Here's

what happened and here's who wants to meet you and here's why I think you should meet them. Okay to introduce."

When both parties have been give the chance to opt-in, then and only then am I sharing information with each other. Ever single introduction you make is also a recommendation and it can be really, really devastating if we're just throwing that out willy-nilly and connecting people and giving out people's personal information, et cetera, without taking the time to make sure that everybody is cool with each other and that you are recommending that person is good.

You might stumble across as it happened to me as I started to practice the double opt-in introduction. You might offer introduction and then find out, "Actually, I know that person. We had this really weird moment two years ago and I just ... No, thank you." Right? Now you spared everybody some face and it works off just far better when it works and far better when it doesn't work to be practicing double opt-in. Unfortunately, I learned it the hard way.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. I cannot agree more on that. Also, if I don't get the actual double opt-in, I always tell people I had sort of a double opt-in value perspective. Because people will reach out to me all the time. They're like, "I wanna talk to Dave because I think my company has the service that we can offer him." I'm like, "Dave does not want me to send the sales guy after you, in terms of the connections."

I agree. I have to get the double opt-in or I make them feel like they both have reciprocal value and someone is not going to be annoyed with me for the introduction.

David Burkus: Exactly right. One other thing, this thing that I forgot to add there that I've learned from experience over time to do too is when you finally do make that connection, don't just drop it like, "Thanks. So, great to connect you to," but actually instruct either Person A or Person B what to do in the follow up. Right? That way both people aren't just sitting there with an email or text message on their phone wondering like, okay, what do I do now? Actually say, "Hey, Bob, would you follow up with times that would work well for you to talk to so and so?" Just so that you keep the ball moving and people are clear on what they action is. I've learned that's really helped too.

Bob Glazer: Well, I'll just add one more to that, when you do that-

David Burkus: We'll keep leveling up. Let's do this.

Bob Glazer: Right. The BCC. Because this is what drives me crazy, right? When do end up responding to that, "Thanks, David." BCC. I had been on people's lunch plans for like two weeks as they go back and forth. I'd be like, please guys, I don't care whether you go to pizza, sushi, but I need to be off this string like 10 emails ago.

David Burkus: You totally should have showed up at the sushi place and then be like, "Hey, I just assumed I was invited too because you kept emailing me."

Bob Glazer: Right. So BCC the person and never call or complaint to the person who made the referral that the other person hasn't followed up with you because that also doesn't make them feel good about doing that.

David Burkus: Right. Totally. But hopefully, when you gave the introduction, you said, "Okay. So and so, please take this action." Hopefully, you have kept them. But you're exactly right. Yeah, I got crickets afterwards. That's always awkward.

Bob Glazer: Yeah. Very awkward. So you wanted to just say thank you and then move on. Well, speaking of saying thank you, David, thanks for joining us on Outperform today. I really enjoyed talking with you. I appreciate your research and perspectives on building strong networks by cultivating more meaningful relationships. That's really valuable insights that you've put together. I encourage everyone to get a copy of the book, which we'll include in the show notes.

David Burkus: Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. This is great. I need to change some of the ways that I give introductions now. Thanks. I learned some stuff too. This is awesome. Thank you.

Bob Glazer: All right. To our listeners, thanks for listening to another Outperform Podcast episode. In the vein of humanizing and building quality relationships, can I please ask you to take a minute to rate or review our Outperform Podcast on iTunes. You'll find the link to our iTunes page on the landing page for this episode along with links to David's website, book page, podcast, and any other resources that we talked about on this episode.

Until next time, keep outperforming.