

LifeMapSM



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

November 28, 2006

This Week's Message:

A Holiday Season Success Skill.

Paths Forward

Resources

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at your next meeting
or conference.**

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A Holiday Season Success Skill.

The holiday season brings with it many demands. Among them are invitations to neighborhood parties, open houses, and office or company holiday celebrations. For some, this social whirl is something to anticipate with pleasure. For others, these multiple demands are stressful drains on their energy and time during an already hectic, chore-filled season.

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My introverted friends have a particularly hard time with a schedule of these events. Some tell me that they actually dread them. Why? Shyness, introversion or sometimes they often fear being ostracized or gossiped about if they do not attend. If they do attend they feel pressured into a group of people that they may not know well or at all, are expected to make a good impression and mix, mingle and chat with the facility and ease of a professional politician. To many it feels like they are putting on an uncomfortable mask, which may fall off at the worst possible moment.

However, these kinds of gatherings are excellent opportunities to renew old acquaintances, make new contacts, expand one's network and raise one's public profile – often in an informal and low-key manner. Learning how to manage your behaviors and feelings in these social situations is a success skill well worth developing because it will contribute significantly to the success and enjoyment of your personal and professional journey – all year long. Here are a few ideas.

Paths Forward

- **Self-Talk.** We talk to ourselves all the time; sometimes we do it out loud, sometimes we do in our mind. "My gosh this traffic is terrible", "This is my big chance", "Who told him he could dance?" (Some of the funnier Homer Simpson moments are when he gets confused about what he's saying silently to himself and out loud to others.) When an invitation arrives by phone or mail, listen closely to your automatic self-talk. Is it something like "Hmm, I wonder who I might meet there?" or is it more like "Oh great, another event being surrounded by people I don't know." Write down your negative comments and then translate them into positive ones. Go from "I bet this will be uncomfortable for me" to "If I try what Dr. Paul suggested I may meet a couple of really interesting people." The key here is to genuinely want to change for the better and overcome years of unproductive negative self-talk. To do this, physically write down these negative comments and then do the same for the improved comments. This will help you re-program yourself for success in this area.

- **Smile.** I live in the northeast part of the U.S. Sad to say but the culture here is not an especially open or warm one. It's not as dour as I observed on the buses and streets of the old Soviet Union but it is miles away from the famed hospitality of our southern neighbors or the genuine

friendliness of Midwesterners. Smiles are universally powerful things; even babies and dogs understand them. They are free but you can't give them away because they always come back to you. In social settings a smile will draw people to you and helps you avoid having to initiate every conversation. Do you know what your smile looks like? Smile in a mirror to see if you look friendly and welcoming or sickly, as if you just found Mike Wallace waiting for you outside your office door. Practice until you get it right. Now, use your new and improved smile at your next social event.

● **Dale C. Was Right.** There are many techniques for engaging another person in conversation. A couple of the best come from Dale Carnegie. He suggests that you really care about the other person (who they are, what they want, and what they hope for), which will stimulate your natural curiosity and prod you to learn more about him or her. I wish I could tell you how to genuinely care about another person – we'd both be better off for it. But if you do actually care about the person in front of you then communicate it. Make eye contact, listen actively, reflect salient points they have made, focus on understanding rather than on being understood. You'll discover the counter-intuitive conundrum that by getting others to talk, you will be judged a sparkling conversationalist.

● **The Right Opening.** The first few seconds, when you are staring into the face of someone who you don't know, can be excruciating. How do you start? What do you say? There are a couple of foolproof ways to go. You can start with a brief introduction; one that you've practiced and that is appropriate for the situation. Such as "Hello, I'm Ned Johnson. I'm in the investment department here." Or you can combine your introduction with a question "Hi, I'm Sue Lerner and I'm on the committee for this event. How did you happen to get involved with Brookview House?" Either approach will put the conversational ball in the other person's court and, hopefully, start them talking.

● **Pitfalls and Potholes.** I almost didn't include this paragraph because I don't want those who might needlessly avoid social gatherings to focus on what could go wrong. But there are a few easy-to-avoid mistakes that I would be remiss not to mention – and I'll be brief. Humor: the ability to tell a joke is a gift. You know if you have it or you don't. Use humor sparingly and deep-six any hurtful, inappropriate jokes in your repertoire. Alcohol: know your limit and stick to it. Business cards: Fine for the business events, use very

sparingly/ upon request for social events. Attire: appropriate for the situation and nothing too provocative.

● **Set a Goal.** Long time LifeMap community members know that I'm big on setting goals and working towards them – even small ones. Before a social gathering of any sort (especially one you are hesitant to attend) ask yourself what benefit you might get out of it. “I could meet some people from the field office or headquarters.” “I might recruit some people to help us with the next Brookview House event.” “I might figure out who in the neighborhood uses that leaf blower early Sunday mornings and convince him to stop torturing me.” “I might meet some folks who could help me with my upcoming job search.” The reality is that you'll never achieve these goals if you don't make the effort to engage with other people – and a social situation is a great, low-pressure way to make that happen.

LifeMap is about helping you achieve your personal and professional goals – even if it means pushing you to try new approaches and techniques, which may be just a bit beyond your natural comfort zone.

Resources

Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

To order the best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. “Winning Job Interviews: Reduce Interview Anxiety, Outprepare the Other Candidates, Land the Job You Love” by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

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Sincerely,

Dr. Paul

Email: **drpaul@drpaulpowers.com**
Phone: 781-237-0550
Fax: 781-237-5721
Web: **<http://www.drpaulpowers.com>**

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Dr. Paul Powers | 30 Ledyard Street | Wellesley Hills | MA | 02481