Introduction

I am not a natural networker; I am an introvert who networks. I work in an industry where, in order to succeed, I need to interact with a wide group of people, some of whom I know well and many I don’t know at all. I learned to network successfully by creating a comfortable process for myself. Usually, when I join groups I get involved on committees, often ending up as a member of the board or president. Having a role helps me feel useful and comfortable in the group. If you ever see me at a large group function, probably I am one of the speakers. Again, a role that keeps me grounded and calm.

I’ve made a good living coaching lawyers and other professionals in practical skills, including leadership, management, business development, and networking. Being an intellectual introvert has helped me communicate with other intellectual introverts. I share the lessons I’ve learned. I teach my clients how to research and plan, how to create “safe havens” from which to venture forth and explain the why of what they do. Practicing what I preach has enabled me to participate in many wonderful group encounters, lead important and interesting organizations and projects, and keep my own company’s pipeline filled with stimulating, remunerative work.

I wrote this book for all the “nonnaturals” in the world who are afraid of the networking process. The book offers anyone who takes the time to read it the tools to turn ad hoc networking into a series of planned strategic steps that will move them toward their goals. The security of a plan and preparation offers introverts the confidence they need to venture forth. The book is also for all the hyper-extroverts who sail through an event having too much fun to maximize the available networking opportunities. Strategic networking keeps extroverts focused; helps introverts feel safe; and encourages everyone to make efficient, effective use of their networking time.
Because I am not a networking natural, I enlisted the help of 35 friends and colleagues who are effective networkers. All of those interviewed are listed in Appendix 1. Between March 2017 and January 2018, I conducted one- to two-hour in-person interviews with each individual, asking him/her to explain the “why and how” of his/her networking activities. Their answers appear throughout the book, offering real-life, from-the-trenches experiences in the strategic networking process outlined in these 12 chapters.

The group includes attorneys (some of whom no longer practice law and have gone on to other pursuits), finance professionals, and a dozen people in other businesses. About half are women; half are men. They range in age from mid-thirties to mid-sixties. Most of them live and work in the Northeast. Three make their living running networking groups, and 11 founded one or more networking groups, many of which are discussed in the book.

Behind every book is a village. My thanks go to so many people who helped me. Andrew Elowitt, my American Bar Association Law Practice Division colleague, liked my idea and helped me get it approved by the Law Practice Division publishing board. He also joined the editing team and, with them, improved the text immeasurably. My thanks to John Rumely, my friend and colleague from my professional community, chosen by me to validate the usefulness of the book for the legal marketing community. John was also a careful reader of the original text.

The team from Lachina, the professional firm that publishes ABA Law Practice Division books, led by Molly Montanaro, has been supportive and helpful throughout the process. And, last but not least, my thanks to two important lawyers in my life who took the time to help me. My brother, Richard B. Schiro, a Texas litigator, read every word even though “networking is not his thing” and found all the padded paragraphs, clichés, grammatical errors, redundant words, and mixed-up thoughts. My friend and colleague, Donna Drumm, found time in a crazy schedule to make sense of and improve the text in very redlined chapters so I could get my edits in on time. To both of them my thanks for making the book more readable.

Thanks also to my friends and family, especially Richard Zuckerman, for supporting me in this endeavor.

Any errors in the content are obviously all my own.

C.