

# ***Riding Elevators Backwards***

***The Aspiring Leader's Field Guide to Building Relationships***

By J. Larry Stevens  
(Published Black Veil Press, LLC - 2012)

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## Foreword

In the Foreword of his book, Larry explains that what really ‘**makes the world go round**’, is not necessarily ‘**love**’, but rather ‘**relationships** – good, bad, or otherwise. What this book does such a good job at doing is to provide an easy-to-follow ‘road map’ for “**developing and using these relationships to your advantage**”. That might sound a little self-serving, but as you see the way Larry approaches relationship-building, using a step-by-step process, almost anyone would feel comfortable applying the methods he describes.

Another thing I love about the book is how easy it is to follow – short chapters – with interesting stories that apply his techniques.

So where does the book get its name? Here’s how the author explains it:

*“This book is about riding elevators backwards and facing the crowd head on; about boldly turning nameless faces into real people, about listening intently to their stories and fearlessly making their stories your own”.*

Larry tells a story about when he was a partner at Price Waterhouse and one of his key client targets was a large environmental engineering firm that was privately owned. There was competition and they ended up losing the business to another firm “*with a less-prepared team, with fewer credentials, and a mundane proposal.*” What was the reason? They discovered it in a debriefing with the CEO:

*“The CEO and the company had a relationship with the managing partner in the other firm. The two were not childhood friends, not even old college buddies. In fact, it may very well be stretching the point to call their relationship a friendship. The more we learned, the more we realized that we had not been ambushed by a deep friendship that transcended common sense and good business. . . Unfortunately, we had been ambushed by a firm that had targeted the engineering company two years before and had spent years in a focused effort to develop a relationship with the CEO.”*

The competing and winning firm “*had spent that time finding ways to interact with the CEO and understand his business issues.*” From a “*get-acquainted meeting when there was no engagement on the table*”, they did other creative things such as offering to host a seminar on hot financial report topics for the company’s accounting staff. They also had tax partners in the firm do pro bono reviews of the company’s corporate tax returns.

So as you can tell, much of this book reminds me of the title of another book I’ve previously summarized by Harvey Mackay, “*Dig Your Well Before You’re Thirsty*”. In other words, building trusted relationships is a longer-term process. It’s about adding value - building blocks along the way that will make the difference. This book will not only give you ways to do that but ways to accelerate the process by which it will happen.

But Larry also adds:

*“Before we start, let me reemphasize: This book is designed to change the way you identify, approach, manage, and nourish relationships. It will challenge you to change old habits, to take a few risks, and to operate outside your ‘comfort zone.’ And it will encourage you to take aggressive steps to make change happen quickly and to alter perception.”*

The Foreword concludes with another preparatory step: get genuine feedback from those closest to you whether they be peers or those above you, and be willing to “**swing the pendulum**” to change the perception of others around you so that one day:

*“. . .you will, no doubt, find yourself walking into elevators filled with people you have never met. Elevators crowded not only with new faces, but brimming with opportunities for building relationships.” . . .“So the next time you hear the bell chime and the elevator door opens, step in, tell your story, and embrace the ones you hear. They may just change your life. Good luck. I know you can do it!”*

## Section I

### The Art of Building Relationships

Larry begins this section referencing a Paramount picture from 2009, “**Up in the Air**”, directed by Jason Reitman, starring George Clooney. There’s a part that shows that if you stuffed a backpack full of all the STUFF you’ve accumulated over your lifetime – starting with the small stuff on shelves; in drawers, closets, etc. moving up to furniture, etc., and then you started loading in ‘people’ from your most casual acquaintances, to your closest and trusted friends, family, associates at work, the **relationships** would make up the heaviest component in your backpack

## Chapter 1

### Riding Elevators Backwards

Imagine like for many us – me included when I’m staying intown a couple days each week – that you start an every-day ritual - riding up an elevator – sometimes alone, while other times packed with ‘strangers’.

Larry describes the ‘ritual’ this way and although I’m only including part of it, all of us can picture the ritual from our own experience. But now, after reading this, just watch when you start riding elevators, you will become an observer of the elevator loading and riding process:

*“That ritual is the silent entry, rapid-reverse pivot, forward-facing stance, and quick-exit technique for riding elevators.” . . . “This reverse-pivot occurs generally without regard to the number of people riding in the elevator, be it just two or a full sardine-packed group of ten or fifteen.” . . . “Secondly, eyes become frozen in a fixed stare and lips become magically sealed for the ride. There will, of course, be one or two groups of friends who chat quietly during the ride, but their voices are lowered and their tone is reminiscent of a sad funeral service. The unwritten rule is to suspend conversation, even amongst friends and colleagues, upon elevator entry. The general idea is that it is rude to exclude other passengers from your personal conversation and is certainly inappropriate to carry on business discussions that could be confidential.” . . . “Finally there is an interesting allocation of space in an elevator. Layne Longfellow, a psychologist in Phoenix, Arizona, says, “Generally the four corners of an elevator are taken first, When a fifth person gets on, he or she will stand in the center. When the sixth person gets on, you can watch the shuffle start. People don’t quite know what to do with the sixth person.”*

Can’t you identify with all of this and can you see why you’ll never ride an elevator again without watching the elevator dynamics?

Next Larry issued this challenge:

*“I want you to acknowledge and understand these unwritten statutes, and then I want you to randomly and wantonly break the rules. I want you to ignore elevator etiquette and make a point of using this time as your private place to meet people and introduce yourself to others. After riding elevators for years with hundreds of subordinates whose names I didn’t know and with numerous executives with whom I’d like to have a relationship, it finally dawned on me, I was , ‘**sitting on a ham sandwich and starving to death.**’ I was being presented with opportunities every day to meet new people, and I was completely missing it by staring at the passing floor numbers in an effort to act as if I were having important thoughts. So I made a decision that literally changed my professional life. I decided I would never enter an elevator and ignore the other passengers. I made up my mind that if I was on an elevator with one or two other passengers, it was very easy to simply turn and say, ‘**Hi, I’m Larry Stevens, and I don’t think we’ve met.**’ “. . .” Which floor do you work on and what do you do?”*

Larry ends this first chapter on pages 8 and 9 with an interesting and humorous anecdote which you can read when you buy the book. He illustrates the point that stepping out of your comfort zone and challenging traditional elevator carries a little bit of ‘risk’, but the benefits you will derive from adopting this as an ‘elevator modes operandi’ will far outweigh any possible negatives. So, just try it.

Larry begins each chapter going forward with “STEP IN!” showing a figure (YOU) entering an elevator with an encouraging phrase:

***“Be constantly alert for opportunities to introduce yourself. People want to tell their story, and it may be a story worth hearing.”***

## **Chapter 2**

### **Defining the Relationship**

The chapter begins with a story you’ll enjoy reading about former Texas Governor John Connally and how he opened the door for some executives who had been trying, unsuccessfully, to get a meeting with the CEO of an oil company. “When asked what this introduction would cost them, Connally immediately replied **One Million dollars.**” Astonished, they asked: “How could that be? It only took you fifteen minutes to make that phone call.” . . . “Connally calmly looked the group in the eyes and said, **‘Gentlemen, it took me thirty years to make that phone call.’** “

Larry’s point, and what this book is all about, is that Connally had discovered a secret that many others have learned over time:

*“The process of building personal relationships requires an investment strategy and process that is no different than investing in a savings account or building a stock portfolio. If you identify the right financial investment vehicles, routinely and methodically make deposits into those accounts, and prudently manage and nourish those investments, they will provide a significant return on investment (ROI). Similarly if you bring that same discipline to identifying and investing in personal relationships, those too will generate a substantial return just as surely as if you were making a deposit in the bank. I call it ‘ROR’, or ‘return on relationships.’ “*

I really like how Larry defines a **relationship**: “. . . a relationship is a mutual agreement that is held between two individuals who have collectively achieved three things: 1) **mutual trust**, 2) **mutual value**, and 3) **mutual chemistry.**”

The author concludes the chapter with the details and action steps that support the strategy. Larry’s Five Rules of Relationship Building:

1. **Relationships don’t just happen: they must be created.**
2. **Relationships are built on trust, value, and chemistry; but the greatest of these is trust.**
3. **Relationships depend on smelly reputations.**
4. **You can never know enough people with money or access to money.**
5. **Real relationships build a legacy.**

### **Step In**

***“Successful relationships are often the result of head-on collisions where personalities collide and create opportunities for their merger with mutual trust and value. Learn to create collisions in elevators, in the business community, and wherever you meet people.”***

## Chapter 3

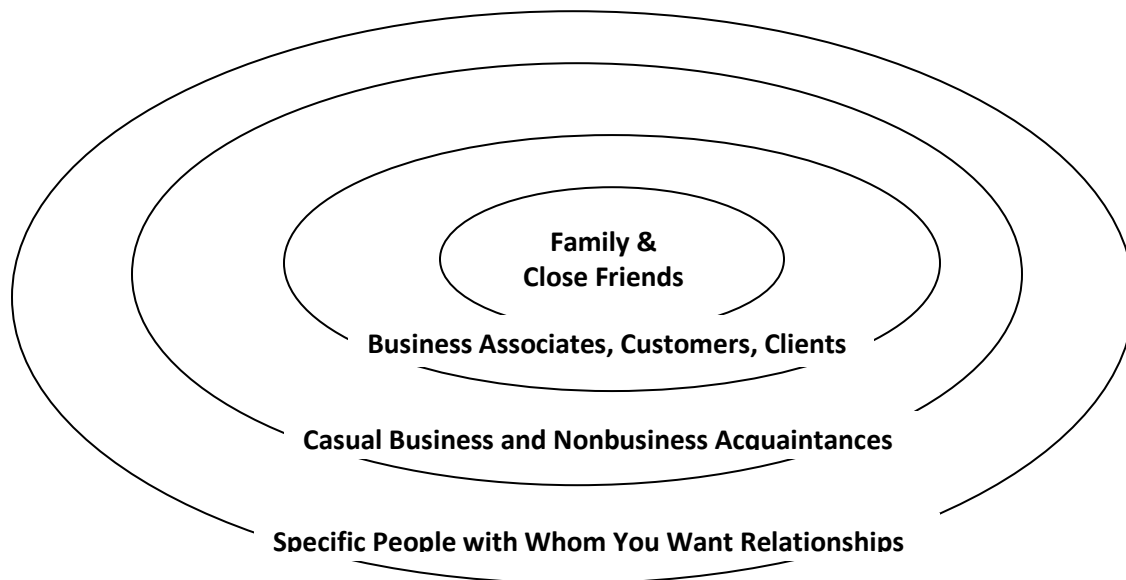
### **Relationships Don't Just Happen: They Must Be Created**

**M**uch of this chapter centers around analyzing your circle of relationships – especially your most important and closest relationships, followed by the question, “**How can we expand that group?**”

Larry has a system for ‘assessing’ the **quantity** and **quality** of your existing relationships stressing “. . .*the importance of creating a ‘disciplined, tactical plan for nurturing old relationships and creating new ones.’*”

Larry’s simplified definition of a ‘**relationship**’ is “*Any person with whom you would feel comfortable calling to discuss an important business or personal matter.*”

First Larry instructs you to take a large sheet of paper and draw a series of expanding circles as shown here, and write the names of people who would fit into each one:



The outside circle is made up of people who YOU know, but who don't know you.

Then Larry suggests an exercise wherein you record a number by each name representing the ‘**level of contact**’ you have had with the person within the last 6 months. Using a scale of 1 to 6 with “6” indicating that you have been in contact within the last month, and “1” indicating that it’s been 6 months since you were last in contact. Then he suggests that you **add** to that, the number of times you’ve been in contact during that period.

Larry uses as an example, someone with whom you've been in contact 3 months ago and that was a one-time meeting. That would then be a '4' (3 mths + 1 contact). This will help illustrate the quantity and the quality of your relationships.

He suggests that we should hopefully find that the highest totals are for those in the inner circles and as you move out, the numbers get smaller and smaller.

And in answer to the questions: ***“How many relationships are enough? How many relationships should I be investing in? How many relationships can I reasonably manage?”*** Larry says over his career, while observing the most success relationship builders, he has learned that “. . . **successful business leaders have no limit on the relationships they seek to develop.** While they, no doubt, prioritize their relationships and are willing to abandon relationships that are not effective, successful relationship builders have learned, perhaps intuitively the magic of the Circle of Relationships.”

If you've ever been curious about the exact explanation of the **“Six Degrees of Separation”** and how it relates to Kevin Bacon, you can find the details on page 21. And Larry encourages you to relate this same **'connectivity'** exercise with your Circle of Relationships and you will find that almost everyone you know in even distant circles will fall within 6 degrees of separation – someone who knows someone, who knows someone, etc.

In the last part of this chapter, Larry stresses the importance of 'numbers'. In order to build a trusted relationship, you first have to meet the person. And so he says, “. . . **you must first put yourself in a position to meet those potential relationships.**” Therefore, the more people you meet, the more relationships you can create.

And for more introverted persons, Larry offers this encouragement: *“I believe that relationship building is a learned skill and does not depend on personality alone. Business has become much more sophisticated over the last twenty years. Furthermore, the day of the highly successful belly-to-belly salesman is gone.”*

So during the remainder of the book, Larry will be sharing a series of tactics and methods which are not difficult but they do require you *“to be willing to put yourself in a position to meet people and influence them with your personality and your interest in them. You must walk boldly into the literal and metaphorical elevator and never turn around. I guarantee you that this will have a significant impact on the way people perceive you and will increase the opportunities you have to make lasting relationships.”*

## Step In

***“Get your colleagues together in a brainstorming session and identify someone you do not know but want to meet. Use your collective Relationships Circles to identify someone who can connect you to that person. How many moves did it take?”***

## Chapter 4

### The Smile

Larry begins this chapter with a Chinese proverb that says, **“A man without a smiling face must not open a shop.”** He also cites the second point of Dale Carnegie’s Six Ways to make people like you” as being a **‘smile’**.

But every one of us can identify with an example Larry offers about the difference in a restaurant setting of a smiling energetic waiter, *“as compared to the waiter who delivered your meal just as fast and efficiently but in a sullen manner. Who received the larger tip?”*

Larry stresses that a smile creates a kind of environment that says, *“I am comfortable with you , and I am confident with myself.”* And he points out that the opposite is just as true:

*“No doubt you can recall situations when you have met new people who did not engage you with their smile. How did you feel? Perhaps you felt uncertain or unsure of the subtle or not so subtle message that was being sent with a blank face or a dour expression.” . . .*  
*“So the next time the elevator opens and you walk in, ask yourself if a smile is just a smile. Think about it. You have a powerful asset with an unlimited supply. **All you have to do is face the crowded elevator and use it.”***

### Step In

**“Do your own smile research. Smile at the next ten people you meet and carefully watch their reaction. Smile at yourself for the impact you had on them and the next people they meet.”**

## Section II

### Searching for Relationships in All the Right Places

## Chapter 5

### Be in the Right Place at the Right Time

Larry begins this chapter with a tip that would seem to be pretty ‘common sense’ but how many people actually follow the Boy Scout creed, **“Be Prepared”**:

*“In meeting people with whom you want to have business or personal relationships, you have to put yourself where they are or where they are going to be.”*

In this chapter, Larry also references one of our local restaurants **“The OK Café”** - notorious for attracting the ‘who’s who’ of Atlanta whether it be former governors, or CEO’s and top executives of our Fortune 500 based companies. One example he cites: *“During the rise and*

*fall of the technology industry in Atlanta, the OK Café became such a gathering place for the techie crowd that one PricewaterhouseCoopers technology manager had a permanently reserved booth from 7 to 10 every morning.”*

So where do YOU go to meet the right people whom you want to meet and with whom you want to build a relationship?

## Step In

***“Willie Sutton was a famous U.S. bank robber. When asked why he robbed banks, he responded by saying, ‘Because that’s where the money is.’ If you want to meet new people, find the place in your community where they congregate and go there.”***

## Chapter 6

### Avoid Lunch without a Purpose

**M**uch of this chapter contains great advice for anyone working in an office with other employees. Larry mentions a sign he says he will never forget: ***“Your desk is a terrible place to watch the world go by.”*** Referencing a business icon – Michael Milliken – he says:

*“Mr. Milliken understood and built a culture around the idea that relationships with your employees, your customers, your suppliers, your associates, your clients, and your business acquaintances don’t happen when you sit in your office. They happen when you seek them out; when you walk the halls; when you leave the comfort and safety of your environment and take your game to others.”*

Of the tips Larry provides on page 43, the one that is probably most valuable reads like this:

*“Finally, never go to lunch without a hidden agenda.” That’s one that is “. . . designed around learning more about your lunch partners. Who are their children? What are their hobbies? What are they passionate about? What is their spouse’s name? What do they read?” . . . “The agenda is hidden, not because you have some devious purpose, but rather because you want a relationship that transcends the business agenda. You want to know who they are, not just what they do for a living. And in doing so, your hidden agenda becomes abundantly clear to your lunch partners. They realize quickly that you actually have an interest in them personally. You care enough to share your story with them and to invite them to share their story with you. Remember relationships don’t just happen; they are built sometimes one lunch at a time.”*

## Step In

***“Take someone to lunch next week and carry a hidden agenda. Let that person discover that your real purpose is him or her.”***



## Chapter 7

### **Do Not Ignore Your Everyday Surroundings**

**T**his chapter introduces a fascinating concept – “**Moral Mathematics**”. Read the story and experiment on page 48 involving a Washington Post article about a world-famous violinist who set up shop in a Washington subway station. The experiment was to see how many people would stop and listen, or hurry past, thinking he couldn’t be that good if he’s playing for free in a subway station. But for those who took the time to stop and listen, it was a thing of beauty.

Larry points out that we have these opportunities that come along in all of our lives to build relationships that could add value to our lives, and yet often we are too busy; too pre-occupied with other issues. The ‘moral mathematics’ question is that when you are confronted with one of these moments, will you “ignore it” or “engage”. Larry cites an example of someone who for a long time, he chose to ignore feeling that there was no mutual value to be attained. But finally at the urging of a friend, he made an overture to have lunch, and that has turned into a great business and friendship relationship. I can think of several of those in my life.

So, the advice Larry gives is three-fold:

1. Take note of people in your community who are active in community service and that you have routinely ignored. Keep a growing list of who they are.
2. Monthly, prioritize and reprioritize your list in three categories: business, community, and family.
3. Introduce yourself to at least one person on the list each month.

### **Step In**

***“Walk down a familiar street. Look and listen for sights and sounds that you have been too busy to see or hear. Look for that extraordinary person who has been camouflaged by ordinary surroundings.”***

## Chapter 8

### **Relationships That Cannot Be Ignored: People with Money**

**T**his might sound mercenary at first, but Larry reminds us that:

*“People with money make things happen. Ever notice how people with money always seem to be in a leadership role whether at an industry trade meeting, the chamber of commerce, the local Rotary club, the First Baptist church, the community synagogue, the local country club, or even the dreaded neighborhood association?” . . . “Often times, the influence they wield is the result of the power of the position they hold, and other times it is the result of the power of their personality. Either way, these are the people you want to know.” . . . “You can never know enough people with money or access to*

money>” . . .”The rule is based on the premise that your personal business success will depend at some point on access to capital and on your having relationships with people that control that access.”

Larry offers a number of real life examples in this chapter that support and reinforce this rule.

## Step In

1. **Prepare a list of all the people you know with money or access to money. Do these individuals know you? What have you done in the last three months to nurture these relationships?**
2. **Prepare a list of all the influential people with whom you would like to develop a relationship? Explore your existing network of relationships and identify people who may be able to provide access.**
3. **Set a goal to meet one new person a month by leveraging your existing contacts with your banker, lawyer, or friends who have relationships with people who have money or access to money.**

## Chapter 9

### Facebook and LinkedIn: Friends or Enemies

I love Larry’s opening paragraph in this chapter:

*“The globalization of the Internet over the last twenty years has bred a new marketing phenomenon that has retailers, advertisers, and researchers in virtually all industries and business segments scrambling to adapt their products, marketing strategies, and sales techniques to a consuming audience with an insatiable appetite for information and an index finger poised to buy or reject their products with a simple key stroke.”*

So what is his opinion of the value of Facebook or LinkedIn? “. . .they are without question, enablers that can help you in your quest to meet people and turn those meetings into meaningful and profitable relationships.”

How do you do this? Here is one of the tips Larry offers in the rest of this chapter but you’ll want to buy the book and read them all to get the full value of his advice: **“Use Facebook and LinkedIn primarily for research, not communication.”** Larry points out that advertisers pay big bucks to advertise on Facebook to readers so they can get *“information about you and what you read and what you like and where you go and who you know. Information that can be mined by companies that ultimately will sell you more stuff.”* In the same way, you can use Facebook and LinkedIn to learn about how various people are already connected and who they are.

## Section III Building Trust, Value, and Chemistry

### Chapter 10

#### Three Inseparable Imperatives

**S**o far, most of the book has focused on the importance of relationships along with providing some great ways to put yourself into a position to begin building a bond. We've learned from Larry: ***“What makes a relationship so powerful that it can trump intelligence, hard work, and performance?”***

Larry believes that there are three foundational blocks that must always be present in order to establish and maintain a meaningful and lasting relationship. And if you remove any of these three, the chances of the relationship actually coming to fruition, or lasting, are remote at best.

The secret Larry explains is a three-legged foundation of **trust, value, and chemistry**:

***Let me illustrate. In order to establish a true relationship with another person, both individuals have to first, establish a baseline level of trust and integrity with each other; secondly they must find a way to individually create something of value for the other person; and finally they must achieve some level of chemistry between each other that allows them to communicate freely.***

I would consider this paragraph to be one of the most powerful statements I've ever read and I would challenge you to think of any long-lasting personal or business relationship you currently have or have had in the past, and think of how all three components are, or were present. You may also be able to see how, over time, if any of these three began to fade, or change, how the relationship began to fall apart.

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The next three chapters go into detail about each one of these three pillars individually. As usual, at this point in my summary, I will highlight some of the key points Larry makes, but I also would very much encourage you to buy the book to get the full value of these three critical building blocks of successful relationships.

### Chapter 11

#### And the Greatest of These is Trust

**T**here is no question that 'trust' is absolutely essential for leadership. Larry puts it this way:

***“Leadership is dependent, first and foremost, on establishing trust that gives others a high level of confidence in your message and your direction. Similarly building long-lasting and meaningful relationships depends on establishing that same level of trust.”***

And although Larry cites several other works on the concept of 'trust', his explanation is based upon a simple premise: "***Trust is built with and around three basic and demonstrable characteristics: confidence, integrity, and empathy.***"

In this section on building "**Confidence**" - the most important of the three pillars of '**trust-building**', Larry covers several action steps for us to work towards, and to make habitual:

## **Trust: Building Confidence**

1. **Go overboard in preparation.**
2. **Master the rule of three.**
3. **Become a story teller.**
4. **Delete PowerPoint from your computer.**
5. **Go ugly early.**
6. **No canoe casual**

**Go overboard in preparation** – if you read the story Larry provides on pages 91 and 92, you will see how not only going overboard in your preparation but coming up with ways to differentiate yourself from your competition – especially in a competitive situation – can win the day.

**Master the rule of three** – Larry starts this section out slowly and frankly I was not real sure where he was going with it: a preacher gives a rambling sermon that puts most of the congregation to sleep; a manager offers an employee a meandering explanation why he or she was one of the only ones not to receive a bonus. Finally, he clears it up. In each case, "***The speaker has failed to take control of the listeners' minds and to engage them at a level that forces their participation both intellectually and emotionally.***"

In each case the preacher or the manager could have benefited by applying **the rule of three** which Larry says has been around since the time of Aristotle and has been a major part of English literature for a few hundred years: "*The concept is simply that people tend to remember things if they presented in groups of three. Think about it. There were three musketeers, three blind mice, three billy goats gruff, Goldilocks and the three bears.*" And he could have added my wife's favorite: the three chipmunks: Alvin, Simon, and Theodore, as well as one of the most obvious ones: our phone numbers divided into 3 parts: xxx-xxx-xxxx to make them easier to remember.

I also felt some sense of pride as I realized, without being aware of the rule of three, I had created the three skill sets of NetWeaving: 1) being a **connector** of others; 2) a gratuitous **resource provider** for others; 3) building a **Trusted Resource Network** made up of exceptional people across a broad spectrum of industries and specialties.

And as you might now expect from Larry, he provides us with three simple steps he has mastered over time, and ones for you to practice, in order to be prepared to invoke the rule of three in almost any situation. I'll give you the first one but you'll need to get the other two out of the book yourself.

The first of the three is "***Narrow the issues down quickly to the biggest or most important ones. This will force you to naturally prioritize your thoughts and eliminate 'noise' around the real issues.***" Read page 98 for the other two.

**Become a story teller** - Staying loyal to the rule of three, Larry gives three reasons why storytelling helps build confidence and trust. The first is that, “***Stories allow you to communicate in a casual way that can be easily understood.***” You can read the other two and why they work on page 100.

**Delete PowerPoint from Your Computer** – If you know that I use PowerPoints, you will probably guess that I read this one carefully on pages 100 – 102 and I will now at least challenge myself to ask if my slides enhance or take away from my basic message or perhaps give too much information that will never be remembered.

**Go Ugly Early** – This is some of the best advice you can ever hear but on the surface, it seems a little confusing. It’s in line with the admonition we all know: “**STUFF happens!!**” Remember the Tylenol crisis back in the ‘80’s when 7 persons were killed by cyanide-laced Tylenol capsules. At that time Tylenol accounted for 13% of J&J’s year-to-year sales growth and 33% of the company’s year-to-year profit growth. They were the clear market leader.<sup>1</sup> It would have been easy for them to ‘stone-wall’ and prolong pulling products off the shelf. Instead they first pulled all the products off the shelf in the local area, but then saw evidence outside that area and did a national recall. It is now consistently referred to as one of the PR coups of the century – the way they responded to the crisis by ‘**going ugly early**’. When ‘stuff’ happens, Larry says, “**Go ugly early even if it hurts. The benefits might actually be greater than the short-term pain.**”

**No Canoe Casual** – At first, I took offense to this 😊 since we live in Big Canoe and there are rare occasions when jeans are not appropriate attire, but I totally agree with Larry’s points in this section about how ‘countering’ the ‘casual attire’ routine sets you apart in a business situation. Read pages 104-109 to hear some actual case examples how this can work to your favor.

## **Trust: Actionable Integrity**

Note the word Larry puts in front of ‘**integrity**’ – “**actionable**”. He makes a great point when he says ‘integrity’ by itself – may not be enough to win the day as far as establishing trust and confidence goes. Larry tells the story of Jimmy Carter vs. Richard Nixon in the Presidential election. After Carter became the 39<sup>th</sup> President, the debacles that followed included: “. . .*falling economy, rising oil prices, hostages stranded in Iran, and perceived indecisiveness all combined to create what historians may consider the most inept U. S. president in modern times.*”. . . “*In building relationships, our integrity cannot stand alone. It becomes effective when it is indistinguishable from our confidence-building actions and our demonstrable empathy for others.*” ***The efficacy of our integrity is activated and harnessed not by what we say, but by what we do.***

Larry offers three ways to ‘guarantee actionable integrity’ in what you do every day and you can read the details on all three on pages 111-116:

1. Just tell the truth.
2. When you don’t know, say you don’t know.
3. Turn lemons into lemonade.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ou.edu/deptcomm/dodjcc/groups/02C2/Johnson%20&%20Johnson.htm>

## Trust: Developing Empathy

In the process of establishing **mutual** trust, Larry says that nothing is more important than having, *“the ability to understand and share, as your own, the emotions and feelings of others.”*

Pages 117-122 offers great insights and explanations of why empathy is so powerful and how it's not enough to just 'walk in the other person's shoes', you have to do these three things in developing true empathy:

1. Avoiding Judgment
2. Becoming Vulnerable
3. Acting on your feelings

### Step In

*Trust must be felt, communicated, and lived. People feel your trust when they sense your empathy for them; they see it when you communicate clearly and confidently; and they live it when you consistently do what you say you are going to do. Make a rule to pay attention to details and keep all your promises, even the little ones.*

## Chapter 12

### Delivering Value

**A**fter Trust, Larry examines the second pillar of successful 'relationship-building' – **“Delivering Value”**. Larry's quick review: “. . .meaningful relationships are dependent on three things, **trust**, **value**, and **chemistry**. In the previous section and chapters, we discussed how trust can be built through **confidence**, **integrity**, and **empathy**. Now let's turn our attention to the second important element in developing successful relationships.”

This chapter alone makes it worth owning this book. You will learn **Kohlberg's three stages** that people go through in developing their individual sense of morality and values, and why some people never make it to stage three where they are making decisions based on the saying: **“just do what you believe to be the right thing”**.

And you know there's value in this chapter since Larry breaks his own rule and gives us FIVE guides instead of only three to use in judging whether or not we are adding value 😊 :

1. Am I bringing new information to the table?
2. Am I interpreting or bringing clarity to a subject or situation?
3. Am I solving a problem?
4. Am I opening closed doors?
5. Am I encouraging others?

## Step In

**Dr. Andy Stanley, pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia, is fond of saying, “Always do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.” Life’s elevators are full of people with pressures, problems, and predicaments. You can’t add value to all of them, but make it a daily habit to do for one what you wish you could do for everyone. Add value one passenger at a time.**

## Chapter 13

### Connecting with Chemistry

I have to confess that this chapter left me feeling a little like the saying in the crazy movie, “Wayne’s World”, “*I am not worthy!*”

This section is all about expanding your areas of interest, knowledge, and semi-expertise so as to be able to talk and share intelligently with those people with whom you are trying to develop a relationship.

Larry begins by stressing that even if the first two components necessary for relationships to be established (i.e. **trust** and **value**), if there’s not at least reasonably good ‘**chemistry**’, the relationship has little chance of surviving. He describes an example this way:

*“You can establish **mutual trust** where two parties both develop a sense of belief and credibility. Simultaneously, both parties can **add value** to the meeting through education, experience, and other factors. But if one of the parties in a meeting concludes and thinks, “**While I trust this person, and he has clearly provided value, I just can’t stand being around him. He grates on my nerves, and I could never work with him.**” Then the relationship will never get past an initial meeting.”*

The justification for Larry’s advice about how to establish chemistry makes total sense but he sets the bar very high.

From a simpler perspective, the advice Larry gives is to make ourselves more interesting? The ‘**graduate**’ level version of that same challenge, and which Larry epitomizes, is to become a “**Renaissance Man**”. To do either of these, he recommends, “**Developing a Reading Strategy**”: He adds: “*In fact, I believe that the number and quality of your relationships will be directly proportional to the breadth of your knowledge across a wide spectrum of interesting subjects.*”

On pages 138 to 154, Larry provides recommended reading sources from history books and biographies of great people, to newspapers and magazines. But he also suggests developing a wider circle of interests from the arts to poet

Larry offers another way to develop chemistry with someone when your interests are not exactly aligned: He suggests that you “**Become a Shape Shifter**”:

*“Aspiring leaders learn early that shape shifting, metaphorically speaking of course, is an essential tool in developing and nurturing relationships. The ability to slip and slide in and*

*out of roles seamlessly gives the aspiring leader a chance to get inside the head of another person, to understand his or her perspective, to relate to him or her, and understand how that person thinks.”*

So what happens if your target client is a huge fan of opera; has a single digit golf handicap, and prefers French wines, whereas you're a huge fan of NASCAR' love your Budweiser, and country music? This is what Larry's 'shape-shifting' strategy is all about and on pages 158-162, he provides three techniques with true stories to back up their credibility:

1. **Invest in a talking-point education** – Larry's point here is that between the series of "Basket-Weaving for Idiot's" books, and many online sources, you can become a semi-expert in a very short period of time on almost any topic.
2. **Turn your ignorance into an asset** - Larry warns that becoming a 'talking point' expert can have some severe limitations, and so why not use your 'mini-expertise' to engage your target client or customer: *"It is my experience that people who are experts in a subject, or who think they are experts, are usually more than happy to share their knowledge if you are willing to confess your ignorance and express your interest in learning."*
3. **Don't ever forget how to go home** – Whether you 'invest in a talking-point' education or become adept at handing the 'expert' ball off to the target client/customer, Larry reminds us that we should never move too far from who we really are:

*"Remember that we started this discussion with the notion that your personality is unique and that is what makes you, well, you! I think we would all do well to remember where we came from and embrace our proud heritage, no matter what it is. I do not want you to change who you are, but rather to be able to relate as you are to other people whoever they are."*

## **Section IV**

### **Relationships for All Season: Living and Dying**

#### **Chapter 15**

### **Developing a Smelly Reputation**

What Larry calls the "**non-proportional theory of reputation destruction**" illustrates this point: *"Reputation is the collective sum of thoughts, impressions, and remembrances that people have of you. It may not always reflect your character, but it is inextricably linked to your character. Unfortunately, reputation is not a fair concept. The positive acts that create a favorable reputation don't always provide credit where credit is due, but negative acts that soil a reputation almost always do more damage than the acts deserve."*

Where Larry derives this term - "**smelly reputation**" - comes from his personal experience:

*"Over many years of visiting clients all over the United States, I developed an ability to walk into a corporate office and in a short few minutes determine the culture of that company. You know how I did it? By watching the employees, listening to their conversations,*



*and overhearing hall talk. But just being there, I learned to get the 'smell of the place.' Do you know what I mean?"*

And don't think the importance of having and maintaining a 'smelly reputation' pertains only to companies:

*"People are no different than companies in this regard. We all have a reputation that has been developed through our normal everyday activities: our routine decisions, our conversation, the way we treat employees and customers, the way we respond to problems, the energy we bring to our jobs, the priorities we establish. We all develop a reputation that has a distinct flavor and aroma to those around us, **the smell of who we are.**"*

Here are the 'smells' Larry suggests you want to leave people with:

- A team player
- A problem solver
- An image of enthusiasm
- A can-do attitude
- Someone who respects and gives others credit

Whereas the opposite smells you want to avoid:

- A worried mind
- Ambition at any cost
- An image of all work and no play
- A self-centered ego with no room for service to others

You will want to read for yourself pages 171-183 to learn all the ways to develop and maintain a "Smelly Reputation".

**T**his is the last chapter I will cover. The other three chapters contain great information which you will want to read:

**Chapter 16 – Exemplary Relationship Builders** – great stories illustrating the various elements of relationship-building covered in the book.

**Chapter 17 – Building a Legacy: The King Factor** – the Ronnie King story – a real life example of 'live like you were dying'. Another interesting question at a funeral graveyard site: "How many times when leaving the graveyard did you see a personal net worth statement carved into the back of the tombstone?"

**Chapter 18 – Mending Broken Relationships** – it's mostly about rebuilding trust.

I will close this summary with a wonderful statement by Larry:

*"Let me suggest that there is no greater calling of a leader and no reputation sweeter or more compelling than one of service to others. Servant leaders not only create a meaningful reputation during their lifetime but also leave a lasting legacy that will pleasantly haunt the lives of all those they have touched."*

In conclusion, Larry, thank you for creating a wonderful work of art that will certainly become an important part of your legacy.