

SELF MADE: The CONNECT Framework Workbook

From Poverty to Published - A Blue-Collar Approach to Professional Networking

"Walk Through Open Doors. If They're Locked, Break Them Down."

Introduction: Your Transformation Roadmap

This workbook is designed around the CONNECT framework; a proven system for building authentic relationships that create life-changing opportunities. This is NOT about schmoozing or fake networking. It's about genuine human connection that lifts everyone up.

Whether you're washing dishes, working construction, fighting fires, or leading a boardroom, these principles work because they're rooted in authenticity, not strategy.

The CONNECT Framework:

- ***C - Curiosity First***
 - ***O - Offer Value***
 - ***N - No Judgement***
 - ***N - Nurture Relationships***
 - ***E - Engage Authentically***
 - ***C - Create Win-Win Scenarios***
 - ***T - Take Action***
-

Chapter 1: C - Curiosity First

"Approach every interaction with genuine curiosity about the other person. Ask: 'What's their story? What challenges do they face? What are they passionate about?' Think of how curious a young child is. Their whole learning system starts with curiosity."

The Power of Being Genuinely Interested

When I first met Kristin at that chili cook-off, I made the classic mistake of trying to impress her instead of being curious about her. I talked too much about myself and not enough about her story. That's a lesson I'll never forget.

Real curiosity isn't about gathering intelligence for your own advantage. It's about recognizing that every person you meet has lived experiences, faced challenges, and developed insights that could change your perspective entirely.

Exercise 1.1: The Curiosity Assessment

Rate yourself honestly on these curiosity indicators:

When meeting someone new, I typically:

- Ask about their background and experiences ____/10
- Listen more than I talk ____/10
- Remember details from our conversation ____/10
- Follow up on topics they mentioned ____/10
- Ask follow-up questions that show I was listening ____/10

Reflection Questions:

1. What holds you back from being more curious about others?
2. When was the last time someone surprised you with their background or expertise?
3. How do you typically respond when someone shares something personal or challenging?

Exercise 1.2: Conversation Archaeology

Think back to your last three meaningful conversations. For each one, write:

Conversation 1:

- What did you learn about the other person? _____
- What questions did you ask? _____
- What would you ask if you could do it again? _____

Conversation 2:

- What did you learn about the other person? _____
- What questions did you ask? _____
- What would you ask if you could do it again? _____

Continue for all three conversations...

Exercise 1.3: The "Private Smith" Challenge

Remember the story about Private Smith from basic training? Everyone dismissed him until we learned he had talents that the rest of us didn't have. We never even bothered to try. Make a commitment to genuinely attempt to recognize the value in every encounter that you make.

Identify Your "Private Smith":

1. *Think of someone you've written off or haven't taken time to really know.*
2. *What assumptions have you made about them?*
3. *What could you learn if you approached them with genuine curiosity?*

This Week's Challenge: *Have a genuine conversation with someone you've previously overlooked. Ask about their background, their expertise, their journey. Discover their hidden value.*

The Curiosity Toolkit

Great Conversation Starters:

- *"What brings you to [event/place] today?"*
- *"What's the most challenging part of your role right now?"*
- *"What's something you wish more people understood about your work?"*
- *"What trends in your industry are you most excited about?"*
- *"Who has been most influential in your professional development?"*

Follow-Up Questions That Show You're Listening:

- *"You mentioned [specific detail]. Can you tell me more about that?"*
- *"That sounds challenging. How did you handle it?"*
- *"What did you learn from that experience?"*
- *"How did that change your approach?"*

Daily Practice: The 5-Question Rule

For the next week, in every conversation with someone new, ask at least 3 questions about them before sharing anything substantial about yourself.

Day 1: Person: _____ Questions asked: _____ **Day 2:** Person: _____ Questions asked: _____ **Day 3:** Person: _____ Questions asked: _____ Continue for full week...

Chapter 2: O - Offer Value

"Always look for ways to help before asking for help. This could be a referral, an introduction, sharing knowledge, or simply listening. Think of it like priming a pump - you must pour water in before water comes out."

The Garcia Family Principle

The Garcia family didn't hire me because they needed another dishwasher. They hired me because they saw a kid who needed guidance and opportunity. That investment without expectation of return changed my life trajectory.

Offering value isn't about grand gestures. Sometimes it's as simple as listening when someone needs to be heard, or sharing an article that might help with a challenge they mentioned.

Exercise 2.1: Your Value Inventory

Most people underestimate what they have to offer. Let's fix that.

Knowledge & Skills:

- *What do you know that others might find valuable? _____*
- *What problems have you solved that others might face? _____*
- *What skills do you take for granted? _____*
- *What mistakes have you made that others could avoid? _____*

Resources & Access:

- *What tools, resources, or information do you have access to? _____*
- *What events or communities are you part of? _____*
- *What products or services do you use and recommend? _____*

Network & Connections:

- *Who in your network might be valuable to introduce to others? _____*
- *What introductions could you facilitate? _____*
- *What groups or communities could you invite others to join? _____*

Exercise 2.2: The Weekly Value Challenge

For the next four weeks, commit to offering value to others without expecting anything in return.

Week 1: Information Sharing

- *Share 3 valuable articles, resources, or tools with people in your network*
- *Write down who you shared with and why: _____*

Week 2: Making Introductions

- Connect 2 people who could benefit from knowing each other
- Document the introductions: _____

Week 3: Knowledge Sharing

- Help someone solve a problem using your expertise
- Record what you helped with: _____

Week 4: Resource Access

- Give someone access to a tool, event, or opportunity
- Note what you provided: _____

Exercise 2.3: The Listening Investment

Sometimes the most valuable thing you can offer is your full attention.

Identify 3 people in your circle who might benefit from having someone really listen:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

This week, reach out to each person and ask:

- "How are things really going?"
- "What's been on your mind lately?"
- "Is there anything you're working through that you'd like to talk about?"

Value-Offering Templates

Information Sharing: "Hi [Name], I came across this [article/resource/tool] and thought of our conversation about [topic]. Thought you might find it interesting: [link/information]"

Introduction Offer: "Hi [Name], I was thinking about your challenge with [specific issue]. I know someone who dealt with something similar and had great results. Would you be interested in an introduction?"

Resource Sharing: "Hi [Name], I remember you mentioning [specific need]. I have access to [resource/tool] that might help. Happy to share if you're interested."

The Compound Effect of Giving

Track how offering value creates unexpected returns:

Month 1:

- Value offered: _____
- Unexpected returns or opportunities: _____

Month 2:

- Value offered: _____
- Unexpected returns or opportunities: _____

Month 3:

- Value offered: _____
- Unexpected returns or opportunities: _____

Chapter 3: N - No Judgment

"Everyone has hidden value. Approach connecting without assumptions about what others can or cannot offer. You never know who holds the key to your next opportunity."

Breaking Down Assumptions

That quiet guy at the networking event might be a CEO. The person in work clothes might have started three successful businesses. The young intern might have connections you've never dreamed of.

The moment we start judging people by their appearance, age, job title, or first impression, we close ourselves off from potential life-changing connections.

Exercise 3.1: Assumption Audit

Let's get honest about the judgments you make.

Quick Judgments I Make Based On:

Appearance:

- What assumptions do I make about people based on how they dress?

- How do I judge people based on age? _____
- What other appearance-based assumptions do I make? _____

Job Titles:

- What roles do I automatically assume are "more" or "less" valuable? _____
- How do I judge people based on their industry? _____

- What assumptions do I make about people's capabilities based on their position?

Background:

- How do I judge people based on their education level? _____
- What assumptions do I make about people from different socioeconomic backgrounds?

- How do I react to people who seem very different from me? _____

Exercise 3.2: The Hidden Value Hunt

For the next two weeks, actively look for hidden value in every person you meet.

Week 1: Surface vs. Reality

For 5 different people you encounter, write down:

Person 1:

- First impression: _____
- After talking with them, I learned: _____
- Hidden value they possess: _____

Person 2:

- First impression: _____
- After talking with them, I learned: _____
- Hidden value they possess: _____

Continue for all people...

Exercise 3.3: The Uncomfortable Conversation Challenge

Identify someone you've been avoiding or writing off:

- Who: _____
- Why you've avoided them: _____
- What assumptions you've made: _____

This week, have a genuine conversation with this person. Ask:

- About their background and journey
- What they're passionate about
- What challenges they've overcome
- What expertise they've developed

After the conversation, reflect:

- What surprised you? _____
- What value did you discover? _____
- How did your assumptions change? _____

The Diversity Advantage

Some of the strongest teams and most innovative solutions come from diverse perspectives. Your circle becomes more powerful when it includes people who think differently than you do.

Evaluate your current circle for diversity in:

Industry/Profession:

- What industries are well-represented? _____
- What industries are missing? _____
- How could you benefit from more industry diversity? _____

Experience Level:

- How many people are at your level vs. above/below? _____
- What could you learn from people earlier in their careers? _____
- Who could mentor you? _____

Background/Perspective:

- How similar are the people in your inner circle to you? _____
- What different perspectives would strengthen your thinking? _____
- Who challenges your assumptions in productive ways? _____

Monthly No-Judgment Check-In

Month 1:

- Person I misjudged: _____
- What I learned: _____
- How this changed my approach: _____

Month 2:

- Person I misjudged: _____
- What I learned: _____
- How this changed my approach: _____

Month 3:

- *Person I misjudged:* _____
 - *What I learned:* _____
 - *How this changed my approach:* _____
-

Chapter 4: N - Nurture Relationships

"Connection building isn't a one-time transaction. It's like farming, not hunting. You plant seeds, tend them, and harvest over time."

The Long Game

Many of my most important opportunities came from relationships I had nurtured for years without any specific agenda. Jeff Bierer was someone I worked with in the National Guard. Years later, his recommendation opened the door to my dream job as a firefighter.

Nurturing relationships means staying in touch even when you don't need anything. It means celebrating others' successes, checking in during tough times, and maintaining genuine interest in their lives.

Exercise 4.1: Relationship Mapping

Create a visual map of your current relationships and their health.

Draw three concentric circles:

Inner Circle (5-10 people): *Your closest advisors and friends*

- *List names:* _____
- *How often do you communicate:* _____
- *Last meaningful conversation:* _____

Active Circle (20-40 people): *Regular professional and personal contacts*

- *List names:* _____
- *How often do you communicate:* _____
- *Last meaningful conversation:* _____

Extended Circle (50+ people): *Broader network of acquaintances*

- *List names:* _____
- *How often do you communicate:* _____
- *Last meaningful conversation:* _____

Exercise 4.2: The Relationship Health Check

For each person in your inner and active circles, assess:

Person: _____

- *Strength of relationship (1-10):* _____
- *Frequency of communication:* _____
- *Last time you offered value to them:* _____
- *Direction of value exchange (mutual/you give/you receive):* _____
- *Potential for deeper relationship:* _____

Exercise 4.3: The Dormant Relationship Revival

Identify 5 relationships that have gone dormant but could be revived:

Person 1:

- *Name:* _____
- *How you know them:* _____
- *Why the relationship went dormant:* _____
- *Potential value of reconnecting:* _____
- *Plan for reaching out:* _____

Person 2:

- *Name:* _____
- *How you know them:* _____
- *Why the relationship went dormant:* _____
- *Potential value of reconnecting:* _____
- *Plan for reaching out:* _____

Continue for all 5 people...

Relationship Nurturing Systems

Daily Habits:

- *Check LinkedIn and engage with 3 posts from your network*
- *Send one genuine "thinking of you" message*
- *Follow up on one commitment you made to someone*

Weekly Habits:

- *Schedule one coffee/call with someone in your circle*
- *Share one valuable resource with someone who could benefit*

- Congratulate someone on a professional or personal milestone

Monthly Habits:

- Review your relationship map and identify who needs attention
- Reach out to 3 people you haven't talked to in a while
- Plan or attend one networking event or gathering

Quarterly Habits:

- Do a deep review of relationship health and priorities
- Plan one gathering or event to bring people together
- Evaluate and adjust your relationship maintenance systems

The Calendar Integration

Block time for relationship maintenance:

Daily (15 minutes):

- Time blocked: _____
- What you'll do: _____

Weekly (1 hour):

- Time blocked: _____
- What you'll do: _____

Monthly (2 hours):

- Time blocked: _____
- What you'll do: _____

Nurturing During Different Life Stages

When Someone Gets Promoted/New Job:

- Congratulate them genuinely
- Ask about their new challenges and goals
- Offer to help them succeed in their new role
- Stay in touch as they adjust

When Someone Faces Setbacks:

- Reach out with genuine support
- Listen without trying to fix everything
- Offer specific help if appropriate

- Check in regularly during difficult times

When Someone Achieves a Milestone:

- Celebrate their success publicly and privately
- Ask about their journey and what they learned
- Share their success with others who would care
- Learn from their experience

Monthly Relationship Investment Tracker

Month 1:

- People I reached out to: _____
- Value I offered: _____
- Relationships that deepened: _____
- Unexpected opportunities that emerged: _____

Month 2:

- People I reached out to: _____
- Value I offered: _____
- Relationships that deepened: _____
- Unexpected opportunities that emerged: _____

Month 3:

- People I reached out to: _____
- Value I offered: _____
- Relationships that deepened: _____
- Unexpected opportunities that emerged: _____

Chapter 5: E - Engage Authentically

"Be yourself. Vulnerability and authenticity create deeper connections than perfect personas. People connect with real humans, not polished robots."

The Power of Being Real

When I stepped into that MMA cage, I was vulnerable. I was inexperienced, nervous, and unsure of the outcome. But I was honest about it, and that honesty attracted supporters. People rally behind those who are willing to risk failure in pursuit of growth.

Authenticity isn't about oversharing or being unprofessional. It's about bringing your real self to relationships - your struggles as well as your strengths, your questions as well as your answers.

Exercise 5.1: Authenticity Assessment

How authentic are you in different contexts?

At Work:

- *Do I show my personality or just my professional image? ____/10*
- *Am I comfortable admitting when I don't know something? ____/10*
- *Do I share appropriate personal information to build rapport? ____/10*
- *Can I disagree respectfully when I have different opinions? ____/10*

At Networking Events:

- *Do I try to impress or do I try to connect? ____/10*
- *Am I comfortable talking about my failures and lessons learned? ____/10*
- *Do I ask for help when I need it? ____/10*
- *Am I the same person whether talking to a CEO or an intern? ____/10*

In Personal Relationships:

- *Do I share my professional struggles with friends/family? ____/10*
- *Am I open about my ambitions and fears? ____/10*
- *Do I ask for support when I need it? ____/10*
- *Can I celebrate others' success without comparison? ____/10*

Exercise 5.2: The Vulnerability Practice

Authenticity requires appropriate vulnerability. Practice sharing more of your real self:

Week 1: Share a Professional Challenge

- *Who will you share with: _____*
- *What challenge will you discuss: _____*
- *What support or advice are you hoping for: _____*

Week 2: Admit When You Don't Know Something

- *Situation where you'll admit ignorance: _____*
- *Who you'll ask for help: _____*
- *How you'll frame the request: _____*

Week 3: Share a Failure and What You Learned

- Failure you'll share: _____
- Lesson you learned: _____
- Who would benefit from hearing this story: _____

Week 4: Ask for Help

- What you need help with: _____
- Who you'll ask: _____
- How you'll make the request: _____

Exercise 5.3: Values Alignment Check

Authentic engagement means your actions align with your values.

Identify Your Core Values:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

For each value, assess:

Value 1: _____

- How do you express this value in professional relationships? _____
- When have you compromised this value to "fit in"? _____
- How could you better align your networking with this value? _____

Value 2: _____

- How do you express this value in professional relationships? _____
- When have you compromised this value to "fit in"? _____
- How could you better align your networking with this value? _____

Continue for all values...

The Authenticity Balance

Being authentic doesn't mean being inappropriate. Here's how to find the balance:

Professional Authenticity:

- Share your genuine enthusiasm for your work
- Admit when you're learning or need help

- *Bring your personality to professional interactions*
- *Stay true to your values in business decisions*

Personal Professional Sharing:

- *Share challenges that others might relate to*
- *Discuss lessons learned from failures*
- *Talk about what motivates and drives you*
- *Be honest about your aspirations and concerns*

Boundaries to Maintain:

- *Keep private personal matters private*
- *Don't overshare about relationship/family drama*
- *Maintain professional standards in language and behavior*
- *Respect others' comfort levels with personal sharing*

Monthly Authenticity Review

Month 1:

- *Situation where I was genuinely myself: _____*
- *How it affected the relationship: _____*
- *What I learned about authentic engagement: _____*

Month 2:

- *Situation where I was genuinely myself: _____*
- *How it affected the relationship: _____*
- *What I learned about authentic engagement: _____*

Month 3:

- *Situation where I was genuinely myself: _____*
- *How it affected the relationship: _____*
- *What I learned about authentic engagement: _____*

Chapter 6: C - Create Win-Win Scenarios

"The best connections create mutual benefit. Ask: 'How can we both succeed together?' It's like building a bridge - both sides need to be supported for it to work."

Beyond Transactional Thinking

When I connected Rob O'Neill with our firefighter leadership program, it wasn't just about getting a great speaker. Rob got a platform to share his leadership wisdom with people who serve their communities. The firefighters gained insights they couldn't get anywhere else. I became known as someone who could deliver exceptional value. Everyone won.

Win-win scenarios aren't always obvious. Sometimes you have to get creative about how to create mutual benefit.

Exercise 6.1: Win-Win Opportunity Identification

Look at your current relationships and identify potential win-win scenarios:

Person/Organization: _____

- Their current challenges: _____
- Their goals and aspirations: _____
- Resources/skills they have: _____
- How I could help them: _____
- How they could help me: _____
- Potential collaboration opportunity: _____

Person/Organization: _____

- Their current challenges: _____
- Their goals and aspirations: _____
- Resources/skills they have: _____
- How I could help them: _____
- How they could help me: _____
- Potential collaboration opportunity: _____

Continue for 5-10 key relationships...

Exercise 6.2: The Connector Role

Sometimes the best win-win is connecting two other people:

Potential Connection 1:

- Person A: _____
- Person B: _____
- Why they should know each other: _____
- Potential mutual benefit: _____
- How I'll facilitate the introduction: _____

Potential Connection 2:

- Person A: _____
- Person B: _____
- Why they should know each other: _____
- Potential mutual benefit: _____
- How I'll facilitate the introduction: _____

Potential Connection 3:

- Person A: _____
- Person B: _____
- Why they should know each other: _____
- Potential mutual benefit: _____
- How I'll facilitate the introduction: _____

Exercise 6.3: Resource Sharing Opportunities

What resources, access, or platforms could you share for mutual benefit?

Events/Gatherings:

- What events do you attend that others might benefit from? _____
- Could you invite someone or get them access? _____
- Could you co-host something that benefits multiple people? _____

Knowledge/Expertise:

- What do you know that could help someone achieve their goals? _____
- What could you teach or mentor someone in? _____
- What insights could you share that would save someone time/money?

Network/Introductions:

- Who in your network could help someone else? _____
- What introductions could create value for multiple people? _____
- How could you facilitate beneficial connections? _____

Platforms/Visibility:

- What platforms do you have access to that could benefit others? _____
- Could you share your audience or platform with someone? _____
- How could you amplify someone else's message or expertise? _____

Creating New Win-Win Opportunities

Brainstorm Session:

Think bigger than just your current relationships. What new opportunities could you create?

Business Collaboration Ideas:

- *Joint ventures that leverage complementary skills*
- *Referral partnerships*
- *Co-created content or events*
- *Shared resource arrangements*

Community/Industry Initiatives:

- *Professional development programs*
- *Industry meetups or conferences*
- *Mentorship programs*
- *Resource sharing networks*

Creative Partnerships:

- *Cross-industry collaborations*
- *Skill-swapping arrangements*
- *Joint problem-solving initiatives*
- *Shared learning experiences*

Win-Win Implementation Tracker

Quarter 1:

- *Win-win opportunity pursued:* _____
- *People involved:* _____
- *Mutual benefits achieved:* _____
- *Unexpected outcomes:* _____
- *Lessons learned:* _____

Quarter 2:

- *Win-win opportunity pursued:* _____
- *People involved:* _____
- *Mutual benefits achieved:* _____
- *Unexpected outcomes:* _____
- *Lessons learned:* _____

Quarter 3:

- *Win-win opportunity pursued:* _____
- *People involved:* _____
- *Mutual benefits achieved:* _____

- Unexpected outcomes: _____
 - Lessons learned: _____
-

Chapter 7: T - Take Action

"Follow through on commitments and maintain regular contact. Actions speak louder than words, and consistency builds trust over time."

The Follow-Through Foundation

"You're only as good as your word." This isn't just a nice saying - it's the foundation of all meaningful relationships. When Chief Staskey gave me the opportunity to join the fire academy, it was because Jeff Bierer had consistently demonstrated that I followed through on commitments.

Taking action means doing what you say you'll do, when you said you'd do it. It means staying in touch consistently, not just when you need something. It means turning insights and intentions into real behavior change.

Exercise 7.1: Commitment Tracking

For the next month, track every commitment you make and your follow-through:

Week 1:

Day 1:

- Commitment made: _____
- To whom: _____
- Deadline: _____
- Completed on time? Y/N
- Quality of follow-through (1-10): ____

Day 2:

- Commitment made: _____
- To whom: _____
- Deadline: _____
- Completed on time? Y/N
- Quality of follow-through (1-10): ____

Continue for full week...

Week 1 Analysis:

- Percentage of commitments kept on time: ____%
- Average quality score: ____/10
- Patterns noticed: _____
- Areas for improvement: _____

Exercise 7.2: The Action Plan Development

Based on your work through this workbook, create specific action plans:

Curiosity Enhancement Plan:

- Specific behaviors I'll implement: _____
- People I'll practice with: _____
- How I'll measure progress: _____
- Timeline: _____

Value-Offering Plan:

- Types of value I'll focus on offering: _____
- People/groups I'll serve: _____
- Frequency and method: _____
- Success metrics: _____

Relationship Nurturing Plan:

- Relationships I'll prioritize: _____
- Communication frequency and methods: _____
- Systems I'll implement: _____
- Review and adjustment schedule: _____

Authenticity Development Plan:

- Areas where I'll be more vulnerable/real: _____
- Situations where I'll practice authenticity: _____
- Support I need: _____
- How I'll track progress: _____

Win-Win Creation Plan:

- Opportunities I'll pursue: _____
- People I'll connect: _____
- Resources I'll share: _____
- Timeline for implementation: _____

Exercise 7.3: The 90-Day Sprint

Commit to a focused 90-day implementation of the CONNECT framework:

Days 1-30: Foundation Building

- *Complete connection audit and mapping*
- *Reconnect with 5 dormant relationships*
- *Attend 2 networking events using new approaches*
- *Offer value to 10 people without expectation*

Days 31-60: Expansion Phase

- *Make 10 new meaningful connections*
- *Facilitate 3 introductions between others*
- *Join one new professional community*
- *Share one vulnerable professional story*

Days 61-90: Mastery Development

- *Mentor or help develop one person*
- *Speak at one event or lead one discussion*
- *Create one gathering or event for others*
- *Document and share your success stories*

Daily/Weekly/Monthly Action Systems

Daily Actions (15 minutes):

- *Check in with one person in your network*
- *Engage meaningfully on LinkedIn or other professional platforms*
- *Look for one way to offer value to someone*
- *Review and update your relationship tracking*

Weekly Actions (1 hour):

- *Schedule one meaningful conversation or meeting*
- *Follow up on all commitments from the week*
- *Plan next week's relationship building activities*
- *Share one valuable resource with your network*

Monthly Actions (2-3 hours):

- *Review relationship health and prioritize attention*
- *Plan and execute one win-win opportunity*
- *Attend one networking event or professional gathering*

- Assess progress on your CONNECT framework implementation

Accountability and Support Systems

Accountability Partner:

- Who will hold you accountable? _____
- How often will you check in? _____
- What will you report on? _____
- How will they support your growth? _____

Progress Tracking:

- How will you measure relationship building success? _____
- What metrics matter most to you? _____
- How often will you evaluate progress? _____
- What will trigger adjustments to your approach? _____

Support Needed:

- What skills do you need to develop? _____
 - Who could mentor you in relationship building? _____
 - What resources would help you succeed? _____
 - How will you celebrate progress and milestones? _____
-

The 90-Day Implementation Challenge

Your Starting Point Assessment

Before you begin, document where you are today:

Current Network Size:

- Inner circle: ____ people
- Active network: ____ people
- Extended network: ____ people

Relationship Quality:

- Strong, trust-based relationships: ____ people
- Moderate professional relationships: ____ people
- Weak/dormant relationships: ____ people

Current Networking Comfort Level:

- Comfort at networking events (1-10): ____
- Confidence in conversation skills (1-10): ____
- Ability to offer value to others (1-10): ____
- Follow-through on commitments (1-10): ____

Professional Situation:

- Current role and company: _____
- Primary professional goals: _____
- Biggest networking challenges: _____
- What success looks like: _____

90-Day Goal Setting

Quantitative Goals:

- New meaningful connections to make: ____
- Dormant relationships to reactivate: ____
- Events to attend: ____
- Introductions to facilitate: ____
- People to offer substantial value to: ____

Qualitative Goals:

- Relationship building skills to develop: _____
- Personal barriers to overcome: _____
- Professional opportunities to pursue: _____
- Ways to become more valuable to your network: _____

Weekly Check-In Template

Week ____

Connections Made:

- New people met: _____
- Quality of interactions (1-10): ____
- Follow-up actions taken: _____

Value Offered:

- People helped: _____
- Type of value provided: _____
- Response/appreciation received: _____

Personal Growth:

- Skills practiced: _____
- Comfort zone expanded how: _____
- Lessons learned: _____

Challenges Faced:

- Obstacles encountered: _____
- How you overcame them: _____
- What you'd do differently: _____

Next Week's Focus:

- Priority relationships: _____
- Events/activities planned: _____
- Specific goals: _____

30-Day Milestone Review**Quantitative Progress:**

- New connections made: ____
- Relationships strengthened: ____
- Introductions facilitated: ____
- Commitments kept: ____

Qualitative Insights:

- Biggest breakthrough: _____
- Most surprising discovery: _____
- Skill that improved most: _____
- Relationship that deepened unexpectedly: _____

Challenges and Solutions:

- Primary obstacle: _____
- How you addressed it: _____
- What support helped most: _____
- What you'll do differently next month: _____

Adjustments for Days 31-60:

- What's working well to continue: _____
- What needs to change: _____
- New focus areas: _____

- Additional support needed: _____

60-Day Milestone Review

Network Growth:

- Network size increase: ____%
- Relationship depth improvement: _____
- Most valuable new connection: _____
- Strongest relationship development: _____

Value Creation:

- People significantly helped: ____
- Types of value most appreciated: _____
- Unexpected ways you added value: _____
- Value received from your network: _____

Skill Development:

- Networking skills improved: _____
- Conversation confidence (1-10): ____
- Ability to spot win-win opportunities: _____
- Follow-through consistency: _____

Opportunities Created:

- Professional opportunities from networking: _____
- Unexpected doors that opened: _____
- Collaborations that developed: _____
- Ways your network supported your goals: _____

Adjustments for Days 61-90:

- Strategies to amplify: _____
- Approaches to modify: _____
- New challenges to tackle: _____
- Leadership opportunities to pursue: _____

90-Day Final Assessment

Network Transformation:

- Starting network size: ____ → Ending network size: ____
- Quality improvement in existing relationships: _____
- Most valuable new relationship: _____

- *Biggest relationship surprise:* _____

Personal Growth:

- *Networking confidence (1-10): Start* ____ *→ End* ____
- *Conversation skills (1-10): Start* ____ *→ End* ____
- *Value offering ability (1-10): Start* ____ *→ End* ____
- *Follow-through consistency (1-10): Start* ____ *→ End* ____

Professional Impact:

- *Opportunities created through networking:* _____
- *Career advancement from relationships:* _____
- *Business value generated:* _____
- *Unexpected benefits received:* _____

The Circle Effect in Action:

- *How others benefited from your networking:* _____
- *Ways your network supported each other:* _____
- *Ripple effects you created:* _____
- *Long-term potential you've built:* _____

Advanced Strategies and Troubleshooting

When Networking Feels Fake

If you're struggling with feeling inauthentic, remember: bad connecting is manipulative, good connecting is human.

The Authenticity Test: Ask yourself: "Would I want to help this person even if they couldn't help me?" If yes, you're connecting authentically.

Reframe Your Mindset:

- *From "What can I get?" to "What can I give?"*
- *From "Who can help me?" to "Who can I help?"*
- *From "Building my network" to "Building relationships"*
- *From "Strategic networking" to "Human connection"*

For Introverts and Reserved People

Some of the most effective connectors are quiet, reserved individuals. Being introverted doesn't mean you're bad at connecting - it means you're wired for depth over breadth.

Introvert Advantages:

- *Better listeners (people love being heard)*
- *Ask more thoughtful questions*
- *Build deeper, more lasting relationships*
- *More authenticity in one-on-one settings*

Strategies for Reserved People:

- *Arrive early when environments are less overwhelming*
- *Focus on quality over quantity (2-3 meaningful connections per event)*
- *Prepare conversation starters in advance*
- *Find others who seem reserved (they're often grateful for conversation)*

Overcoming Common Obstacles

"I Don't Have Time"

- *You're already connecting; just make it intentional*
- *Use transition times (coffee before meetings, lunch during conferences)*
- *Combine connecting with existing activities*
- *Focus on quality relationships rather than meeting everyone*

"I Don't Have Anything Valuable to Offer"

- *Everyone has value - your lived experiences matter*
- *Your connections might be valuable to introduce*
- *Your willingness to listen is often the most valuable gift*
- *Your unique perspective adds value to discussions*

"People Don't Respond to My Outreach"

- *Make your messages about them, not you*
- *Reference specific shared experiences or mutual connections*
- *Offer something of value in your initial outreach*
- *Be patient - people are busy, follow up appropriately*

Maintaining Momentum

Monthly Relationship Review:

- *Who needs attention in my circle?*
- *What opportunities am I not seeing?*

- *How can I better serve my network?*
- *What adjustments should I make?*

Quarterly Network Assessment:

- *Is my network diverse enough?*
- *What industries/perspectives am I missing?*
- *Who are the connectors in my network?*
- *How can I become more valuable to others?*

Annual Relationship Audit:

- *Which relationships have grown strongest?*
- *What patterns led to my best connections?*
- *How has my networking approach evolved?*
- *What do I want to focus on next year?*

Success Stories and Examples

The Dishwasher to Fire Chief Pipeline

My journey from washing dishes at Lafonda to becoming a Battalion Chief wasn't a straight line, but every step was enabled by relationships:

- ***Garcia family*** gave me my first job and taught me work ethic
- ***Mr. Garland*** introduced me to firefighting possibilities
- ***Andy Trujillo*** connected me to military service
- ***Jeff Bierer*** vouched for me when academy spots opened
- ***Chief Staskey*** gave me the opportunity when others dropped out

Each relationship was built authentically, without agenda, but together they created a career trajectory I never could have planned.

The MMA Community Connection

When I declared I was going to fight in a cage, I didn't just pursue a personal goal - I created a movement that inspired others:

- ***Peak Team*** formed around shared challenge and growth
- ***Training partners*** became lifelong friends and supporters
- ***Local businesses*** sponsored and supported our journey
- ***Community members*** rallied around our fights and events

The ripple effect of one ambitious goal, pursued authentically and shared openly, created a network that extended far beyond martial arts.

The Regional Officers Development Program

Creating the first regional fire service leadership program required navigating complex organizational dynamics:

- **PJ Lingley** became an ideal partner despite our recent competition
- **Chief Foreman** provided immediate support and resources
- **Regional fire chiefs** bought in because of existing relationships
- **Participating firefighters** gained skills that benefited entire region

This success came from years of relationship building across department boundaries, maintaining integrity through competitive situations, and focusing on mutual benefit over personal gain.

Your Next Steps

Immediate Actions (Today)

1. Complete your Connection Audit (Chapter 1)
2. Identify 5 dormant relationships to reactivate
3. Schedule your first relationship-building activity
4. Set up your tracking system
5. Make your first commitment to follow through

This Week

1. Reach out to 3 people using the principles you've learned
2. Attend one networking event or professional gathering
3. Offer value to 2 people in your existing network
4. Practice authentic engagement in all your conversations
5. Document what you learn and how people respond

This Month

1. Implement all 7 elements of the CONNECT framework
2. Build relationships with 5 new people
3. Facilitate at least 1 introduction between others
4. Share one vulnerable professional story
5. Create your first win-win opportunity

The Long Game

Remember: this isn't about quick fixes or overnight transformation. The most powerful relationships take time to develop. The opportunities that change your life often come from connections you made years earlier.

Stay consistent. Be authentic. Focus on serving others. Trust the process.

Your circle is waiting. The connections that will change your life are out there - some in people you already know, others in strangers you haven't met yet.

The only question is: are you ready to embrace the power of authentic human connection?

"Walk through open doors. If they're locked, break them down."

Resources and References

Recommended Reading

- *Books on authentic relationship building and professional networking*
- *Leadership development resources*
- *Communication and emotional intelligence guides*
- *Industry-specific networking strategies*

Online Communities

- *LinkedIn groups in your industry*
- *Professional associations and organizations*
- *Local chamber of commerce and business groups*
- *Alumni networks from schools and previous employers*

Tools and Apps

- *Relationship management systems (CRM tools)*
- *Calendar apps for scheduling relationship maintenance*
- *Social media platforms for staying connected*
- *Note-taking apps for tracking conversations*

Events and Conferences

- *Industry conferences and trade shows*
- *Local networking mixers and meetups*

- *Professional development workshops*
- *Community events and volunteer opportunities*

Remember: The final chapter of your story isn't written yet. What connections will you make? Whose life will you change? How will you use your circle not just to advance your own success, but to lift others up along the way?

The journey continues...