

Rely on Contacts to Get Through Barriers to Success

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Your connections are more than just “good for business”!

Maybe it’s just me, but when I have to go to a government office to get a license or anything else accomplished, I prepare myself for failure.

There is always something that I forgot. That I didn’t anticipate. A form that I should have gotten first. The list can be endless. And when all you really want to do (or more likely *need* to do) is attend to the business of running your business, who has the time for such issues?

When my former law partner and I opened our new law office in 2003, we had temporary space while our tenant improvements were being constructed. Our landlord at the time was very good to us, but we needed to be out of his hair within 45 days. In that time, we only had to design, permit, construct, and finally inspect 1,500 square feet of raw, empty office space. We had no time for permitting delays or construction delays for whatever reason.

Being that I had focused my career on construction law, I had made many contacts in the construction industry. I called one of my friends who ran a small general construction company and told her my problem. Our plan did not have to be fancy, but we had to look professional.

We needed six offices, two conference rooms, a reception space, secretarial spaces, and a break room. Telephone systems, computer networks, and filing space were mandatory. She could have just told me “No, can’t be done.” Instead, she committed to try. I committed to quick turn-around on owner decisions. I roughed out a pencil sketch of the office layout I thought would work. And, we agreed on a budget.

There was no talk of a contract. (And I was a lawyer!) We’d get that done in a bit. She called some of her best contacts—designers, subcontractors, suppliers. I called a few subcontractors I knew as well. Over the next 30 days, I saw exactly what those personal relationships and business connections meant.



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Within 48 hours, we had a design to submit. My friend's connections at the government building department got us through plan check and building permits within a week. The subcontractors, simply as a personal favor to me and the contractor, treated the work like it was the largest job on the Strip. I made sure there was pizza for everyone at the site on Fridays. I even helped the computer subcontractor pull cable for the network—and he didn't complain or charge me extra. In four weeks, we had our certificate of occupancy and started moving in furniture. We were open for business only 35 days from that first meeting.

Over the next few months, I fielded a number of calls from some of those subcontractors, looking for legal advice. I repaid their commitment to my project with an equal commitment to their legal issues. As a result, not only did I quickly get great space to work in, I made a bunch of great new clients!

When starting a small business, the power and help of your connections is a commodity that you should not ignore. Call your friends. Use those connections. They not only will help you, they will come to you when they need help too. And, that is just good business.

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