

Networking 101

Claudine Land:

Hello, everyone! And welcome to the Virtual Ingenuity Business Podcast. Our topic for today is networking 101. Now, before we dive in, let me introduce you to my guest, Dr. Cecilia Hegamin-Younger. She is a prolific author, educator, mediator, businesswoman, and entrepreneur. She's also a personal branding specialist. She has a 20-year track record in evaluation and data analysis. She has successfully consulted for Fortune 500 companies, educational institutions as well, marketing research companies, and health organizations. She's helped them to maximize their productivity by developing cutting-edge designs for their projects to support teaching, research, and professional developments in order to drive growth and sustainability. She has also received various honors and awards, such as the International Institute Scholar for the Society of Teaching and Learning, also Who's Who in American Women, and Who's Who in the World between the years 2009 to 2012. Being Bold and Driven is her third book, but also the first in the business and entrepreneurship series. Dr. Younger, welcome to the Virtual Ingenuity Podcast. Thank you so much for being a guest!

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Thank you, Claudine, for having me.

Claudine Land:

You're welcome. I am so excited about diving into Networking 101 today because there's so much to be said during this podcast so this is a much-needed discussion. So let's talk about some of the questions that you, Cecilia, because we're friends I'll call you Cecilia. That you get most in your business. The number one question is, "So what is networking and why is it beneficial to my business?" I want to chime in a little bit, and I want to say that to me, networking is interacting with people, either in person or virtually, to develop a relationship. It's not a quick fix. The key term here is developing a relationship. So let's talk about that a little bit. What is networking and why is it beneficial to a business, Cecilia?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Networking is really important with whatever you do, in business and life, but to go back a little bit, a few years ago I had the chance to interview financial agents around the country. And so a lot of what we're going to talk about today is really what they asked and what we talked about and the information that I got. What I was looking for was what the differences were from successful financial agents to unsuccessful financial agents.

Claudine Land:

Very much key.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

It is. Yeah. And one of the things that were evident was networking. A lot of the unsuccessful financial agents, and I say financial agents, but it can be anybody. Is that they go into a networking event thinking, "I'm going to go out and pass my cards around." I used to do that years ago and I never got any business from it or anything. How I developed my business was really word of mouth because people started knowing what I was doing. And then they would start to call me or I had referral partners that they would talk about me to other people who may need me. And that's how I developed my business.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

So with networking, we have to change that mind shift because when we think about it, it's connectedness, but when we start to implement it, we get a little transactional with it by saying or thinking that we need to go out and meet people and meet a lot of people and with the intention on really exchanging our information and our services. But if you think about when you go out to a networking event and everybody that you meet, you think about how many people you actually remember and it's not a lot. So we need to change that to being so broad and trying to meet everybody to really developing or cultivating relationships that are productive relationships in business.

Claudine Land:

And networking, Cecilia, is about sharing. Everyone has a story. Share your story with someone. And networking is great because you can always get fresh ideas from networking too. You're absolutely right when you say it's not about selling your business. It really isn't. It's about really just having a conversation and sharing ideas, sharing what you do. That's really great because it's an excellent source to get a new perspective and ideas to help you in your role, whatever your business role is.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah, it is. And it's about starting a relationship. And how do you usually start relationships? You get to know somebody and you have the stories about maybe how you developed your business or the people that you know, but it's about the stories. And so you have to have those pitches about what you do, but it's in a story and it's not directionally selling.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

I remember I was talking to one woman and this was aside from my research, but she was in one of my organizations, and the first thing that she did... She was just like, "Well, hi. My name's Carston. Here's my card. I'm a financial agent so if you need someone come to me," but that's not how you start a business and it actually turned me off. I think it turned a lot of people off as the year developed in my committee.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

But yeah, know your story and that's what you start off with, but you also have to be interested in someone else. You have to be interested in what their story is before you even start with what your story is.

Claudine Land:

And you know what, Cecilia? You have to build your reputation, right? Think about it. We're not friends with people just by them introducing ourselves. We just don't become friends that quickly with people. They have to build our trust. We have to get to know them. They have to be reliable. They have to be supportive. So it's the same thing with networking. You have to build that trust.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. And with networking, what you're trying to do is show that you're a real person and that you can be trusted, that you are credible and reliable. And that's what the goal is with networking. So you're not trying to go to an event to meet everybody. You're going to meet a few people and you want them to remember you.

Claudine Land:

Yes. And even if you don't do business with someone later on down the line, it's important that you can just be a reference. I call it being a connector. I'm known for being a connector. I may not ever do business with someone that I meet, but I can refer them to somebody else. I can connect them and introduce them to somebody else that may be beneficial to their business as well.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. For example, I know one gentleman. He was on the board and the board was a high-profile board. And one guy came to him and just said, "I will never do business with you, but you know what? I will refer people who need you." And so you have to think about the people that you meet. Are they referral partners or are they clients? And then what the difference is. Referral partners, you're getting your message out to more people. The client is just one. So you need to really think about who your ideal client is, and who your ideal referral partner is.

Claudine Land:

Two very important points. And I also want to say too that... Let's talk about the importance of networking. So networking is really going to help you to stay top of mind with people that you meet. So you may have a business and you think, "Oh, I'll just sit here." And because your business is virtual, you don't have to meet people. That is the wrong mindset to be in. You've got to stay top of mind with people that are in your community, that are in your network.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes. But even virtually, you have to look at local first before you can go out to the world because you need to have your relationships and being considered reliable and authentic in your local community because they will help market you.

Claudine Land:

That's right. And I think networking too is a great opportunity to exchange best practice knowledge, to learn about business techniques of your peers, and to really just stay abreast of industry developments and what's going on in your industry as well.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

It is. Yes. The one thing I like about... Oh, go ahead.

Claudine Land:

No, go ahead, Cecilia.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

The one thing I like about networking is that when you remember everybody that you meet, you're actually cataloging them of what type of business they're in, who their networks are, and who they reach because you never know when you can refer someone to them because it is an exchange. It's not just one way. It's both ways. And sometimes people forget that. That it's not just about you trying to develop your business. Everybody's trying to develop their business.

Claudine Land:

So true. And I think another great aspect of networking is that you can get career advice and support. I always tell my clients that I realize that they're my client, but you also need a mentor. Who knows who you're going to meet when you network? You can meet your mentor there. It's also a way to build confidence. You may have someone that is not comfortable stepping outside of their comfort zone and talking with people. Well, being in front of people and networking will help to boost that confidence as well. And I know you wanted to say something.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

No, it does. Because when you go out and you start meeting people, it trickles down. It's like, "Oh, I'm okay with this." And so you go out more and you meet more people. But the other thing is that you need to choose your events. You need to choose where you're networking and it needs to be part of you, part of you personally.

Claudine Land:

That's right. And also ask for opinions. When you network it's not just about you. It's a great way to get an idea across, to get someone's opinion on a certain idea that you have as well.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. Yeah. I think it is so key to meet people and see their potential for how they can mentor you because if it's in the right position, they might be able to mentor you. But also that exchange of ideas... Because you don't know how you can help them and they can help you. But when you're in the environment... I find that being an entrepreneur, it gives me so many more ideas because you're meeting other people and you're getting to know who they are and your tentacles go out. Because the other thing about networking? You never know who's watching you.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

And that's even more important because when people are watching you, they're looking to see if you're authentic, you're reliable, you can be trusted, and then they can come to you.

Claudine Land:

Right. And I also want to say this before we move on to the next question that I have for you. Just remember a good rule of thumb when you're networking is to really just plan ahead and have a few relevant points of discussion in mind that you maybe want to talk about. So it's not, again, about selling your brand. Maybe you just want a few questions answered and you never know where that's going to lead. And also just keep in mind it's a great opportunity to meet new people. So you're just having a discussion.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. But also they're there for the same reason you are. But you have to distinguish yourself and set yourself apart from other people.

Claudine Land:

Yes. So let me ask you this. So I know that you have clients, Cecilia, that ask you, "What can I do when a person doesn't remember me?" They go to networking events all the time, but when they follow up the person doesn't remember who they are. What advice can you give about that?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Look, that's a great question. And there are two things. On your business card, first, you have your picture because people keep business cards and if you're calling them, they're going to look through and try to figure out who you are. And that picture will actually put you top of mind of who you are and then also it keeps you in their mind about what you do. But I think more importantly is the follow-up. What I like doing when I go into network events or just meet people, I'll get a selfie with me and that person. Because what I do after that... I get their card and then I'll send out a postcard and the picture on the postcard is going to be a selfie of that person and myself. That keeps you top of mind.

Claudine Land:

Great idea.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. There's this company SendOutCards.

Claudine Land:

SendOutCards! I love SendOutCards. Yes.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. And that just helps marketing. And then the other thing, if you know their birthday, you send out a card saying, "Happy birthday!" But that keeps you in someone's mind. It's like, "Oh, this person is really nice!" Because you're going out of your way to do something for someone else. Because you don't know how their day's going. Something in the mail... And not just email, but something physical, that actually brightens someone's day if it's not a bill, it's not junk mail. It's like, "Someone thought about me!"

Claudine Land:

That's right. I am synonymous with sending out birthday cards or just simple notes. My clients and my friends know that's always something that I grew up doing, is just sending a nice handwritten note. But even now with my friends and clients, anyone that I meet, it's always a birthday card, no matter what.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. And it makes a difference. It keeps you in their mind. So when you call, they know who you are.

Claudine Land:

Right. And then I also want to mention too, before you go to that networking event, it's so important to research the event and then some events that you sign up for, it will also give you a list of participants, a list of who's going to attend and who's already signed up to attend. So you know what I sometimes do? I'll go on LinkedIn and find that person and find out what their likes and dislikes are, and what they've been posting about, and then you can find out what's really important to that person. And then you could even send them an email prior to the event to just introduce yourself.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. And actually, that creates an awareness about you prior to the event so they actually want to get to know you. It's like, "Oh, wow. This person has something substantial they see about me and let's connect." And I think that also helps bring you top of mind again. It's just like, "Oh, I want to meet this person and this person. They're making an effort to get to know me."

Claudine Land:

That's right. One thing I've also seen, Cecilia, is that people are now putting QR codes on their business cards. And so you have your phone there and you scan the QR code and a picture of that person comes up and then you just save it in your contact. I've also seen that to work really well. Another small gesture too to get people to remember you is a simple handshake. I remember people that give me a firm handshake. I'm always about giving people just a really great firm grip. And that person that returns that same solid handshake, I'll always remember that person.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

That's true, although with COVID it's a little iffy. I know they're relaxing the guidelines and everything, but I think people are still a little social distancing.

Claudine Land:

They're easing back into it. Yeah.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. So fist bump is great now depending on what the person actually wants. You have to be conscious of that as well.

Claudine Land:

One thing that doesn't go out of style, though, is great eye contact. Eye contact with the person.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes.

Claudine Land:

And then also demonstrate your knowledge of the industry too when you meet somebody. If you have a topic you want to talk about, practice in the mirror. How are you going to ask the person that question? And I don't want to call it necessarily an elevator pitch, but just whatever you want to talk to that person about... Because remember you have your top three topics that you want to discuss when you go to the networking event. So practice just asking those questions and then ask follow-up questions as well when people make comments that you meet.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Right. But you know what else? Stay on top of current events, because you're building a relationship. What are you going to start with? What's happening in the world. That's how you can always start a conversation. And it's nice because you can actually just talk about something that you may have in common or just an outlook of what's happening today.

Claudine Land:

That's absolutely right. Yes. So what about the person that comes to you, Cecilia, and says, "Well, I've joined all these civic organizations in my community, but I'm just not getting a return on my investment." Then what?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

It's a mindset and you need to shift your thinking. It's not a return on investment. You think about return on value. What value are you providing that organization? When you choose organizations, how are you choosing them? The organizations that you should choose are ones that are an extension of yourself, your personality, your passions because what you need to do in these organizations is not just pay your money and go to meetings. No, you need to be active. You need to be active so that people see you. You need to be active so that people want to connect with you, they want to interact with you. And the best way to do that is to sit on committees, work with other people, and have a leadership role. The visibility of you increases and people start seeing you. Again, it's not about who you know. It's about who knows you.

Claudine Land:

That's right. Absolutely.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

So you have to think about it in terms of the value. What value are you providing that organization? And if you're not providing that organization value, you shouldn't think that you're going to get clients from it.

Claudine Land:

It's all about providing that value. That's right. So what if the person is an introvert, Cecilia?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Oh. Being an introvert it's.. And I'm an introvert. So when I first started going to networking events, I hated them.

Claudine Land:

I don't know if I believe that you're an introvert, but okay.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

I had to get comfortable getting to meet people and just starting a conversation. But you know what? And as we discussed when we start the podcast, is that when you start networking, it builds confidence. But you know what? There are a whole lot of introverts. And you know where they are? Along the wall. Go up and talk to them.

Claudine Land:

But you know what introverts are really good at too? They're really good observers.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes. And they listen.

Claudine Land:

They listen!

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

They listen.

Claudine Land:

Exactly. They listen. They listen to people before they actually connect to them and they tend to be very careful when they're speaking too. And usually, I've noticed they will consider their opinions before speaking, which we all should do. And I think that introverts, because of their active listening skills, they're really better conversationalists and they make deeper connections, I think.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

No, I think that they do as well, because they're not going... Although they would love to go out and work the room they're not going to and they realize that. And so the one or two people that they meet, they are deeper connections that they know more about and that the person that they're meeting knows about them. And so with their deeper connections, they get really good referral partners because they're a little bit more considerate about, again, what they say and how they say it, but they're actually going to listen to you. And so if you think something's important, they're going to pick it up.

Claudine Land:

That's right. And then too introverts, what they could do is if they get that list of people that are going to be attending the event, they could actually, like I said before, email that person in advance and then they could have that list of maybe four or five people that they really personally want to connect with and just make that effort to connect with those people because you've already done your research on that person. You know what they like and you know how to pull them into a conversation.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes. And with that cold call, the person should have read the email. You shouldn't be doing it last minute, but it's a warm call basically. Their email is in your mind. It's like, "Okay, well, where is this person? They want to meet me." They know that you're going to come up. So it's nicer. You're not just going up saying, "Hi, my name is."

Claudine Land:

And then you could also have a friend with you or another colleague with you and have them make the introduction and act like they're your conversational wing person I call them and just help you out a little bit. At least that will just break the silence a little bit and help you just to feel more comfortable. And then you could always as well as if it's getting too much for you just take a 10-minute break. Leave the room after a certain amount of time has passed and then just come back to the event, but just so that you're not nervous.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

True. But also, like you said, if you look them up on LinkedIn, have a question because people remember you for the questions that you ask.

Claudine Land:

Absolutely. That's such a nice way of making an impact too on people.

Claudine Land:

So there are also folks that have been in the community for a long while, 15, 20 years in the community, and folks aren't hiring them. Why do you think that is?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

A lot of times the people that you know don't go to you because they know you in a different manner.

Claudine Land:

That's right. They know you in a personal way.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

And if you were a person who was a child who was unreliable, they still have that in their mind and they're going to watch you and they're going to watch you succeed. And when they do they come to you, but they have to actually see that you're authentic, you're reliable and can be trusted. I know one of my friends, she is an accountant and we are really good friends, but I never wanted her to know my finances because we're in the same social circles. And I had to get over that, but I also had to see that she was also doing it for other people and then I felt more comfortable. But it's the same because people that you know, they know you in a different capacity. If they don't know you professionally, they have to really look to see if they want to do business with you, because sometimes the transaction might be very personal and they have to be able to trust you.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

So it's the patience. It's the wait-and-see. And it's like anybody else that you don't know that you wanted to come and do business with you. They're the same way. Don't try to force it. They'll come.

Claudine Land:

Yeah. This leads me to my next question. Are there any quick tips for networking? I think that it takes effort. Yes, it does.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes.

Claudine Land:

And it takes time to build that relationship. Are there any other tips that you want to give for networking? Gosh, we gave so many already.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

I'd like to go back and just align yourself with, one, the events that you go to, the organizations that you are affiliating with yourself. Think about who you are as a person. What are your hobbies? What things do you like to go out and do? Your interests, your hobbies, and your passions, and find ways to connect with people with those same things. So for example, I love hiking. So I go out on hikes, but that's the best way if you're in a group to talk to people. And when you talk to people, so they get to know who you are, what you do. And it's an indirect way because you don't have to have a sales pitch. You're just getting to know somebody. That's what I found to be very effective because you get those deep relationships, just like when you play golf with people that you don't know. You have like five hours to talk to this person. Very lonely and boring, but people get to know each other. And that's why you do a lot of business on the golf course.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Another thing I said before, is to be active. When you're networking or... I like to think instead of networking events, the organizations that you join, the clubs that you join. Be active, participate, get to know people, and have people get to know you and your authentic self. And then the third thing is always ask how you can be of service. You ask that three times before you can even ask somebody, "Can you do business with me?"

Claudine Land:

"How can I help you in your business?"

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yeah. And people remember that because they're like, "Oh, you're really trying to help me. You're interested in me." And so then they think of you as, "Let me see what I can do for this person."

Claudine Land:

Right. Right. "How can I be of service?"

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

You have to show your authentic self.

Claudine Land:

Yes. How can I be a referral source for somebody else? How can I connect that person to what they're needing or to their goals?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Yes. And with COVID I like how so many networking groups have got online. And they are more dynamic, more effective than they were before COVID.

Claudine Land:

That's right. Because you're not in person. And so now you have to think of creative ways to capture the attendees' attention. And I love that. Yeah. That's great.

Claudine Land:

So what have we learned about networking today? Engaging regularly with your contacts and finding opportunities to assist them helps to strengthen the relationship. It's not always about you. So by doing this, you sow the seeds for reciprocal assistance when you need help to achieve your goals. So, Cecilia, tell me where my listening audience can get in touch with you.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Oh, wow. You can email me at cecilia@beingboldanddriven.com but also I'm on Twitter at BeingBoldOnline and Facebook, Being Bold.

Claudine Land:

Very good. And guys, listen, Cecilia. Is there anything else that you want to share about Networking 101?

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Connectedness and cultivation. Those are the two key things with networking. You want to have the mindset that you're trying to connect with people and you're trying to cultivate the relationship.

Claudine Land:

Very good. I love that. Great closing.

Claudine Land:

So guys, listen. To my listening audience, be sure to read Dr. Cecilia's book. It's called Being Bold and Driven. And I want to hear your feedback on it too, okay? And be sure again, to get in contact with Dr. Cecilia Hegamin-Younger. Okay. Again, you can catch her on those social media channels that she mentioned. She's on Twitter. She's on LinkedIn. Also guys, again, Being Bold and Driven. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Cecilia Hegamin-Younger:

Thank you for having me.

Claudine Land:

You're welcome, Cecilia. Let's impact together, guys.

Thank you so much. Until next time. Bye-bye.