

Title: The Importance of Reciprocity in Networking
Alt Title: Why Is Reciprocity Valuable in Networking?

The Value of Reciprocity

I believe in R.I.S.K.-ing it when it comes to networking. This handy name stands for “Reciprocity, Interdependency, Sharing, and Keeping at It.” There’s a reason I put reciprocity first – and no, it’s not just for the acronym.

There are a few main ingredients that really help a network move along. Anyone can make connections and keep up with them – but you can’t stop there! Many people can use networks as personal sources of information and favors, without giving anything back to the others who are helping them. This is a pretty poor practice and can seriously damage your relationships.

Reciprocity is key when it comes to keeping up with your network. Networks are relationships formed to meet the needs of all people involved. Without reciprocity, you can come off quite poorly – and lose rapport among your connections.

What Does Poor Reciprocity Look Like?

Kevin is an ad executive living in New York City. He works in the financial sector and needs to travel to Los Angeles for a top-priority meeting with some other executives to close a deal. One problem: Kevin forgot to book a nice place for dinner for the meeting. And this meeting is just a couple nights’ away, and he can’t find a table anywhere.

One of Kevin’s old colleagues owns a nice restaurant out in Beverly Hills. The restaurant looks booked online, so Kevin calls her up and asks if she could spare him a table. She agrees, and books him a nice private table. The meeting is a success and Kevin closes the deal.

A few months later, Kevin’s restauranteur messages him for a favor. She’s hosting a charity event and needs help creating ad campaign to get it off the ground. Kevin tells her that he can’t do work for free, and doesn’t respond to any subsequent emails.

What does Kevin do wrong here?

Right. He does not reciprocate. He leaves his colleague hanging after she did him a huge favor – favor that led to a major deal closure.

If you were the restauranteur, how would you feel? You would probably *never* want to help Kevin again, and would remove him from your network – which is understandably fair.

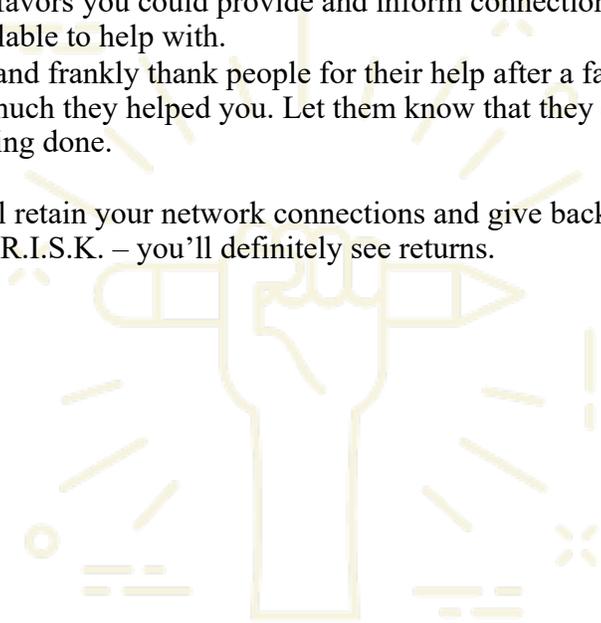
Best Practices for Reciprocity

Sometimes, failing to reciprocate is not as blatant as our Kevin example. Sometimes, poor reciprocity can be much subtler – and we might not even realize we're doing it!

However, there are a few key practices you can implement to make sure that you remain on even ground with your network connections.

- Keep a spreadsheet of favors. You do something for a connection? Your connection does something for you? Mark it down. Keeping track of who you owe favors to and vice versa can help you know who to reach out to when you need something done and who you need to respond to.
- List the potential favors you could provide and inform connections who help you out of what you are available to help with.
- Always formally and frankly thank people for their help after a favor. Follow up and let them know how much they helped you. Let them know that they can reach out to you if they need something done.

With reciprocity, you will retain your network connections and give back to those who help you. Always practice the R of R.I.S.K. – you'll definitely see returns.



Loralee Sepsey

Think human. Write human.

