



## The Balanced Lawyer

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Jeff Davidson

### Partners in Progress

Lawyers who have achieved success in the profession or in life often seem to know something special about connecting with other people. They say the right things and associate with the right people. They have a knack for keeping up with what is going on, and they find many ways to use that knowledge to form alliances.

So, let's talk about partners: not necessarily law practice partners, although they are important, but rather partners in all aspects of your career and life.

#### You Gotta Have Friends

Of all the other people with whom you could combine forces, your professional peers are the easiest to identify and join in partnership. Your peers consist of co-workers, other people in law, and individuals with whom you have a rather natural and easy communication chan-



nel. Peer group partnerships tend to be more fluid, though potentially as powerful as any other type of group.

Undoubtedly you already belong to one or more peer groups consisting of two or more people.

#### Partners All

- Affiliates
- Comrades
- Principals
- Cohorts
- Helpmates
- Founders
- Contributors
- Friends
- Partners
- Colleagues
- Team members
- Co-venturers
- Collaborators

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**Jeff Davidson**, on the web at [www.BreathingSpace.com](http://www.BreathingSpace.com), holds the registered trademark as "The Work-Life Balance Expert®." Jeff is the leading personal brand in speaking, writing, and reflecting on work-life balance issues and he has a passion for speaking to law firms that want to help their professional staff members make rapid progress in this arena. Jeff is the author of *Simpler Living*, *Breathing Space*, *The 60 Second Self-Starters*, and *The 10 Minute Guide to Managing Stress*, as well as 24 iPhone apps in his Work-Life Guide series on iTunes. Jeff's books have been published in 18 languages including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, Turkish, and Russian.

- Joint venturers
- Class mates
- Mates
- Group members
- Crew members
- Staff members
- Associates
- Helpers

### **Terms of Affiliation**

- Band
- Team
- Crew
- Union
- Unit
- Skunk works
- Conglomerate
- Party
- Council
- Task force
- Assembly
- Commission
- Committee
- Board
- Advisory board
- Cabinet
- Congress
- Parliament

Every time you encounter another co-worker, however, you potentially open yourself up to a world of opportunities and knowledge that you might not comprehend based on a brief encounter. If Kim is one of the people you hang around with and she also happens to have expertise in a specific area that could make a big difference to you, then Kim certainly is part of your array of professional resources.

Depending on their education, background, and experiences in general, you may find selected individuals who can serve as ad hoc trail guides, at least pointing you in the right direction. Consider

this: a quick, well-delivered phone call to one of these valuable contacts, a one-line email, or a brief encounter in the hallway could result in you getting the right input at just the right time to propel your project or task forward.

### **Partners: Care and Feeding**

In the professional services arena lawyers, obviously, as well as accountants, dentists, doctors, and engineers, traditionally establish their firms as business partnerships. Even in the smallest of informal groups—the two-person group—it is often preferred to have one person who is in charge.

When two friends form a partnership, trouble can loom because their friendship itself can get in the way. If they've gotten along well for years, each may assume that the same relationship is possible in a business setting; however it's wise to be wary. Partnerships at work are a different animal.

Despite the pitfalls, there's something special about having one other person with whom you partner that can draw out the best in both of you. As long as partners respect the capability or contributions of the other, partnerships can flourish.

### **Appeals for Participation**

People respond to high appeals for participation. When Colin Powell assumed leadership at the U.S. Department of State in January 2001, his closed-door 90-minute session with top agency officials reportedly was the stuff of which legends are made.

Although Powell didn't allow a recording of it, allegedly lifelong state department employees re-dedicated themselves to the agency's work in an unprecedented manner. Now that is recruitment! Likewise, you hear of coaches who give half-time pep talks that rally their teams onto victory despite the shellacking they took in the first half.

You might not possess legendary alliance-building skills, but elements of your personality and communication style undoubtedly can be harnessed to

win people over, and get them to partner with you. You can start on this road, the next time you attend a meeting or business function. You can even start with total strangers!

High-octane persuaders vary their style depending on the degree of formality, level of seriousness, and people involved. They have subconscious ideas of their desired outcomes in the back of their minds. These ideas might range from negotiating a business deal to successfully completing an involved project. In particular, those with a knack for forming alliances realize the importance of using a person's name. It has been said that our names are the "sweetest and most important sounds in the English language" to many of us.

The accurate use of names is crucial in greetings, and alliance builders are especially adept at remembering and using them. Some naturally have good memories; many others take memory enhancement courses to learn and practice the many tricks for remembering. They know how important this skill can be. Addressing someone you have recently met with confidence, without mixing up his or her name, opens the door of opportunity.

One veteran lawyer instructs his assistant to make calls before a meeting and create a list of the names of people who'll be in attendance. He studies the list before the event so that he'll be at his networking best when arrives.

### **The Host with the Most**

At a business reception, small pockets of people congregate between the bar at one end of the room and the table at the other end. The opportunity for making new business contacts here is ripe.

You'll spot at least one person, smiling and gracious, moving around the room fluidly, shaking hands and introducing himself or herself with

direct eye contact and a warm smile. This person spends some time with each individual he or she greets, listening carefully while the other talks.

This person's ability to form alliances and partnerships is head and shoulders among the others in the room. Whatever his job title, he understands a critical factor in human relations, described by Dr. Adele Scheele in *Skills for Success*

The importance of exhibiting host behavior. In other words, such people don't wait around to make connections. They know when to take the initiative to make others feel comfortable in a meeting environment.

To make new quality contacts, seize the opportunities that come your way. When you have the chance to meet someone in person, first, introduce yourself. Some alliance builders have a focused agenda and seek occasions for making business contacts or improving business relations.

It may seem elementary, but many people feel too awkward to even say who they are. State your name and position with enthusiasm. Then give enough information to lead the other person into an engaging conversation. All this takes only a matter of seconds. Practice will take away the awkwardness you may feel at first.

Alliance builders seldom have the problem of having nobody to talk to; if left alone momentarily, they have a knack for acting in a commanding manner. Rather than sinking into the woodwork, they stand straight and, sipping a drink, survey the room with a look of alert interest and even slight amusement. *They're never left out because they don't act left out!* Their talent for creating new acquaintances that lead to friendships, which lead to partnerships, is impressive to behold.

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