

SPECIAL BONUS

build your dream network

FORGING POWERFUL
RELATIONSHIPS
IN A HYPER-
CONNECTED WORLD

j. kelly hoey

Foreword by Tom Peters,
bestselling coauthor of *In Search of Excellence*

*To #BYDN Readers, thank you for championing Build Your
Dream Network.*

*To Carter Clements and Lisa Abeyta for cheering me on (and
proofing my drafts).*

*And, to my PRH team for their ongoing encouragement and
incredible support.*

About this book bonus:

Just when you thought you didn't need to worry about your network or how you were networking, 2020 happened. Overnight, the usual ways we relied on or frankly, defaulted to in order to make connections (whether to change careers or pursue business interests, nab an investor, sell a book or secure that first job) just disappeared. From conferences to commutes to coffee dates, routine ways to interact have had to be reimagined and recalibrated for a highly hyper-connected, yet socially-distanced world.

But did networking really change all that much? Or were we finally forced to put some thought into an essential activity we'd gone into auto-pilot on (for some time!) or worse, relegated it to the bottom of a to-do list for "someday" because there wasn't anything we thought we needed a network for at the moment?

In celebration of the fifth year since its publication (*book-birthday?*) networking expert, J. Kelly Hoey, builds upon her Build Your Dream Network message, showing

us how the absence of IRL (in real life) networking has not necessarily diminished the number opportunities we have (literally) at our fingertips to make meaningful connections.

With new insights (along with references to existing Build Your Dream Network case studies), Kelly demonstrates that online networking should not be considered secondary to IRL networking - rather, it is IRL networking. She explains that by approaching digital channels (whether that is email or the chat function of an online webinar) the same way you would enter a “real” room, you can build the network(s) you need with the tools currently at your disposal, at a time when you need your networks more than ever before.

How Did You Network During The Pandemic?

Oh, the party sure stopped abruptly in March 2020.

One evening, I'm hosting a few gal pals in my midtown Manhattan studio apartment for wine time as we wonder what is going to happen, how long plans to travel etc. would be 'on hold'¹ (oh, the inconvenience of it all!) then boom! literally overnight, everything slid sideways into chaotic stillness - and I didn't invite anyone in my home until a vaccine was widely available, some 16 or so months later(?!).

A few personal tidbits (as no, I don't share every aspect of my life on Instagram).

I live alone. Well ok, in a doorman building in New York City, so there were "real" people for me to engage with routinely, safely from six feet away (along with the front-line workers on the occasional trip outside to go

inside a grocery, wine or drug store). With those limited exceptions, I've spent a heck of a lot of time over the past 20+ months in the physical absence of others. I am my own virtual networking experiment. Not only have I been thinking about how we engage with each other (in the evolving present and future), but I've had to examine my personal feelings as to how, when and with whom I want to engage.

While a shared, global experience, the pandemic is one which we have all experienced individually.

I recall a note I received from a nomadic Millennial in late Fall 2020, six or so months into the pandemic. She was traveling to New York from San Francisco (with a number of other stops in between) and wanted to know if I could meet up with her in person. WTW! Is this person thinking, screamed the voice in my head. Granted she offered to meet outside and while I applaud her for seeing this time as an opportunity to explore new cities (and as much as I salute those determined New Yorkers who braved the elements to dine outdoors regardless of the season), there was no way I was meeting in-person with someone I barely knew in the midst of a pandemic at any time, in any venue. Clearly, levels of risk, pulls to connect, and good

old common sense (or is it courtesy?) vary, as was made abundantly clear by the pandemic.

Like a lot of people, I probably tried to do too much early on (Twitter live-streaming video chats 4x a week at 10:30 am - what on earth was I thinking!), so I pulled back, then found a more sustainable tempo to nourish my network and networking needs. Ways I've engaged and expanded my networking repertoire during the pandemic (beyond complete reliance on texts, posts, tweets, updates, Zooms, FaceTime etc.):

- Snail Mail (trips to the post-office have been a highlight of my pandemic social calendar)
- Podcast interviews
- Calls (really, you can make calls with your smartphone!)
- ClubHouse (though, I'm a bit over it now, I shall confess)
- Live-streaming video
- TwitterChats
- Socially-distanced walk + talks
- Virtual games of Cards Against Humanity
- Online theater
- Online fitness (pilates, meditation and yoga worked well, the "sound bath" followed by a group discussion, not so much)

- Mastermind groups (assembled as I pondered the subject matter for a new book)
- Weekly polls and questions in an online community built on Mighty Networks
- Hosting virtual office hours
- Expanding my involvement on the board of a professional organization
- IG Live (on occasion)
- A single Google group (side note: from the range and volume of the conversation, I suspect, for me, being a member of this one Google Group will be more than sufficient)

I also exited Facebook. Put the Build Your Dream Network podcast on hiatus. And somehow, I've managed to avoid Slack, sourdough starter and adopting a puppy.

No doubt about it, in spite of all these best efforts to remain 'networked', my own network has shrunk - and yours has too. According to one study² published early in 2021, professional and personal networks shrunk by close to 16% during the course of the pandemic. But HOW is that possible you may be wondering as you think about all the team meetings on Zoom, happy hours on Zoom, family gatherings on Zoom, community celebrations and worship on Zoom, you

have attended. Then there are the numerous Slack channels with your closest collaborators. But hold on! This is where I ask you to flip to sub-Chapter “More Or Less: Which Is Your Network?” at page 41 of Build Your Dream Network along with the visual description at page 42. Some networks are built by activity - and there are a number of activities we simply did not undertake routinely in 2020 (and much of 2021), such as:

- Commuting to the office
- Hanging out in a co-working space
- Leisurely sipping on a latte inside the local coffee shop
- Working out at the gym
- Attending an industry conference - in a conference center

These activities support the healthy growth of our networks as they facilitate acquaintance-level interactions. That small talk and banter you used to find annoying? Yeah, its not completely useless. It’s actually quite relevant. Small talk contributes to the growth of our “wider” network, the so-called “weak ties” - and those wider, non-overlapping not-your-spouse-or-BFF networks are a source of new, novel information. What’s more, these casual conversations contribute to our overall health, happiness and well-being³. And that

wider network my friends, is the one that has shrunk for the overwhelming majority of us. So, if you found yourself being overly chatty with the receptionist at the dentist's office following your first pandemic dental cleaning or with the barrista at Starbucks when you figured it was safe to order a cappuccino from a person rather than with an app, this could explain why.

¹ LOL - oh how sweetly naive I was back in the Spring of 2020 to imagine that "it" (a global pandemic) would pass by in a few weeks and then, back to pre-pandemic plans and routines!

² Social Networks and Loneliness During the Covid-19 Pandemic - Balazs Kovacs, Nicholas Caplan, Samuel Grob, Marissa King (First Published January 19, 2021)

³ Gillian Sandstrom, a psychology professor at the University of Essex, leads the research on the power of "weak" ties (as distinguished from the strong ties we associate with soulmates, siblings, BFFs etc.). As she notes in a BBC interview "“we need to feel that we are part of a group and part of something bigger” – and this occurs when we chat with a stranger or someone we are lightly acquainted with.

Check out: Why small talk is so important to our mental health (and how to avoid agony) or dive into her thesis research: Social Interactions and Well-Being: The Surprising Power of Weak Ties - Gillian M. Sandstrom (2013)

Why Is This Still Happening?

To state the obvious (or the obnoxious?) some people really didn't put on their networking thinking cap during the pandemic.

Examples (as no, I didn't need to use my imagination to create bad networking scenarios, they land in my inbox routinely, forwarded by friends who need an outlet for their unwanted outreach frustrations):

The new college graduate emailing a CEO in late Spring 2020 to request an in-person coffee date to *"explore whether there are any openings in your company that he/she/they would be suitable for"* (resume attached).
No Words!

The *"hey I'm going to be in your city and would love to see you"* auto-generated email dinner invitation, wherein all recipients are Bcc'd. Networking "love" for

an intimate gathering is not a generic group email.
Sorry.

The Ivy League graduate, mid-career professional reaching out on LinkedIn for mentorship with the message *"I'm so impressed with your background and I'm seeking mentors. Can we schedule a phone call? Here's a link to my Calendly, select a time that works for you."* Cringe (and delete!).

The job seeker, who casually shrugged off missing a call with a tech executive (a meeting the job seeker requested), then texted *"can you forward my resume along to HR? I only wanted to speak so you could get me a job at your company."* WTW! And no, the resume was not forwarded.

The *"I landed a new gig and want to tell you all about it"* friendly-acquaintance call that turned into an incredibly awkward sales pitch. This was complete reputation crusher (and the sales pitch failed too).

The email from someone I met once, 6 years ago with the line *"I see you are a networking expert and was wondering if you had any contacts which could help my company in building out our client base."* Really....(and delete).

Then there are the approximately 50 or so women in finance who signed up for 15-minute speed mentoring sessions (on Zoom) with a busy, Wall Street executive (who actually found she had TIME to schedule mentorship into her calendar during Covid). Why do these 50 mentees make the networking no-no list? Brace yourself:

- Only 3 of the mentees sent a “thank you” email, acknowledging the time and advice given by the executive who VOLUNTEERED up her time and reached out with the offer to provide mentorship.
- None of the mentees followed-up (and if you’ve read Build Your Dream Network, you know how I feel about follow-up).

No words! And then again, no ongoing mentorship from a committed mentor for a community that (generally) is desperately seeking role models, sponsors and career advocates. This is an example of a massive networking fail on an epic scale.

I’m going to pause here on the bad networking path...as pointing out the sh#t is endless (likely you’ve already been traumatized enough by your own Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, endless email and random

LinkedIn request experiences) plus I can't even with all those who ghosted prospective employers/employees or the "let's connect on LinkedIn [url]" messages dropped into Zoom chats or the "you two should jump on Zoom to get to know each other" introductions or the newsletters I suddenly found myself subscribed to.

Phew.

So, instead, let's get on to ways to make this digital, virtual, mostly online hybrid networking thing work for us.

Digital Really is Real Networking

How we *choose* to approach technology and apply digital networking tools can bring us closer, open new doors, and launch strong, meaningful, lasting connections.

Really.

I've felt this way for a while (as Janet Hanson, founder of 85 Broads, will attest) and in spite of bad online networking behavior, I still am optimistic on the ways tech can work to bring us closer.

But it's up to us, not the tech.

All it takes is for each of us to make a mindset shift on the value - and possibilities - of spending time engaging with other people online. It involves ditching the old networking playbook that portrays the "real" activity of networking as in-person, at events and involving business cards (you know, all the stuff we

generally assumed was networking - that was suspended because doh! a global pandemic). Even with IRL in-person events resuming, virtual engagement is here to stay, so my strong, seasoned networking advice is to fully embrace networking generosity in every digital interaction, even when you're limited to 280 characters. I repeat: I've been saying this for a while now¹...it is far from being a "new normal" networking mantra for me.

As you read on in this brief Build Your Dream Network "birthday" supplement you'll find examples from Erin Cronican (executive artistic director of The Seeing Place Theater) and storyteller Ian Sanders which illustrate (beautifully!) this concept - and yes, their examples are ones I'll be incorporating into my own networking toolkit. But let's start with an example from my own life. It's the story of how best-selling author Tom Peters became a mentor and friend - even though we've only ever met IRL offline, once.

The story of how I met Tom, starts on Twitter, a hang-out where I seem to meet many interesting people. I don't know exactly when I started following Tom on Twitter (yes, our friendship started with a follow) but suspect it may have been during my early days on Twitter back in 2009 (when I was particularly interested

in conversations around people management and corporate governance in business organizations). I was employed as a global marketing manager at the time, tasked with building a professional services firm's alumni program. In order to actually "do" what I was hired for, I spent a lot of time online, relying heavily on the "big 3" social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) for insights, connections and information on the firm's alums.

My initial approach to Twitter - let's call it networking - was simply to listen. I searched around on Twitter (using that great research tool, the #hashtag) to find topics and conversations I was interested in. When I found one person to follow, I'd see who they were following or tweeting with as that would quickly lead to more conversations around the topics I was interested in. So at some point in early 2009, I started following Tom. I'd read his posts, I'd like some of them, and when I was brave enough to open my mouth, I'd post a comment or retweet something he said. Then one day, Tom replied and I realized, he was following me.

For me (as I've shared in Build Your Dream Network), Twitter is a great cocktail party. A massive venue (ballroom, conference center, lounge, hallway, club...) filled with endlessly interesting conversations

(along with the nonsensical, ridiculous, mundane, and profane) that anyone can join, if they so desire AND if they are a good guest. I want to highlight that last part: IF they are a good guest.

What makes a good guest? Listening, observing, and not immediately rushing in with something you want to say. A good guest is respectful (not deferential but considerate, and actively focused on what is going on in the conversation). A good guest is interested in what others have to say, not just the sound of their own voice (or tweet).

As I look at it, by following someone, I'm requesting permission to join their conversation ("*do you mind if I join your conversation?*"). When I "like" a tweet, I'm acknowledging what they have said (no different than a nod). A retweet is the equivalent of "*oh, I agree*" or "*fascinating*" or "*what an interesting thought*" or some other cocktail party banter we spit out when we're actively focused on (aka listening to) what someone else is saying.

From polite nods, my conversations with Tom (and others) on Twitter expanded (side note: a dozen years later, it is hard to imagine that I was ever a quiet party guest on the platform). Key to networking, wherever it

occurs, is you have to commit to showing up for your network, and showing up does not mean once in a while (when you have something to sell) or only when convenient or only when you need help with your job search! Consistent engagement - along with taking a genuine interest in what others are up to - builds trust, and trust builds meaningful relationships. 'Nuff said (go back to Build Your Dream Network if you have lingering doubts on this).

Now, sometime in 2016, Tom tweeted to tell me that he had pre-ordered a copy of Build Your Dream Network - a delightful surprise, I still haven't recovered from. I hadn't personally told him I was writing a book; he noticed. I hadn't followed Tom with any expectations of some "networking" outcome (like buying my book). But as a result of ongoing dialog, a mutual connection developed. From that "I bought your book" moment, I viewed Tom not simply as "someone I follow" but as a mentor and friend. A mentor and friend I've met once in-person, when meetings with his publisher brought him to New York City. In case you're wondering, meeting IRL was seamless - the person I know online is the person he is offline. The only difference in our offline dialog: we were not confined to 280 characters and hashtags were not inserted at the end of our sentences.

Before Twitter, how would I have met a best-selling author like Tom? A lengthy fan letter? Gushing at a book signing? Both of those options sound perfectly hideous and more than a bit creepy, plus completely out of character for someone like me (I'm all about stretching outside my comfort zone, but there are limits determined by my ambivert authenticity).

Twitter (and to some degree, other social networking platforms) has democratized access to networking opportunities that have been previously closed to many of us. It's expanded my networking footprint, just as it has the potential for you to do the same. So time to think about how you're showing up.

¹ When I say I've been championing treating digital, online platforms as an essential part of your networking toolkit for a while, I really do mean, I've been saying this for a LONG time. Case in point, the post "[Networking Q&A: Connecting Online](#)" from way back in the day (2015). There are likely earlier posts but let's leave it at that.

For a #BYDN refresher on networking online:

1. Go re-read Chapter 5 #Networking. It starts @ page 139 of [Build Your Dream Network: Forging Powerful Relationships In A Hyper-Connected World](#).

2. Jump over to the Build Your Dream Network podcast, and listen to:

[How To Reach Out On Social Media](#)

[How To Network At Online Conferences and Virtual Events](#)

[Don't Use Your Network Like A Web Browser](#)

[Leveraging Twitter To Enhance Your Connections \(with Elena Rossini\)](#)

[Twitter: How To Connect in 280 Characters \(Or Less\) With Heidi Moore](#)

Challenging Pre-Pandemic Networking Norms

Actor, activist and non-profit thought-leader, Erin Cronican,¹ had her networking boundaries stretched during Covid. Based in New York City, Erin is the executive artistic director of The Seeing Place Theater (a NYIT-nominated indie theater known for it's intense, intimate and social justice focused work). Her networking solely focused on the New York Tri-state area (with a few exceptions for friends and family outside of this geographic zone). I know, NYC, the center of the world! If you can make it here, what other networks do you need? Well, what Erin discovered over the past 20 or so months, while developing Zoom-first theater productions (no, she did not have the luxury of simply sitting it out in the wings until Broadway reopened), was a bigger audience² for her productions - far bigger than she previously imagined. Covid decimated IRL live theater, and in its destructive path, left a level playing field for the consumption of art.

Here are some of the ways Erin expanded her network³ and networking:

- Industry courses and events hosted by The Alliance of Residence Theaters. These offerings generally fell into one of two formats: roundtables of 10-15 peers or business talks with anywhere between 30 and 100 attendees. In both instances the gatherings attracted a niche group seeking best practices for non-profit theater production. An insulated community (one, as Erin shared with me, that pre-pandemic could feel rather lonely), was now coming together. The visibility and communality of needs gave Erin identifiable industry peers to turn to (but more on that later).
- Re-thinking her Facebook strategy. When marketing The Seeking Place's designed for Zoom productions, Erin realized she was freed from all her carefully crafted geography+location-based event marketing mailing lists.
- Joining the virtual networking group Lunch Club which lead her to Adrian's Network (a diverse network of NYC and Tri-state area professionals). One of the questions Erin puzzled over during Covid was how far to cast the networking net,

how wide, how deep in terms of geography as the return to live IRL in a physical theater, remained on horizon (there are IRL activities I understand that have been permanently ditched for Zoom interactions, but theater is not destined to be one of them). With “why not!” gusto, Erin jumped into Lunch Club, enjoying numerous conversations without an end-game in mind. The openness to see where conversations would lead, resulted in an introduction to the founder of Adrian’s Network (who happens to be a rabid theater fan, so as you may expect, a lot of members of Adrian’s Network, are theater goers too, though this not something you’d necessarily know in the absence of a personal referral).

As I point out in *Build Your Dream Network*, you have got to put yourself in front of serendipity, which Erin did in another way during The Alliance of Residence Theaters’ events she attended. Here’s her effective and simple strategy: she paid close attention to who else was in the Zoom room. Yes, you read that correctly! She watched, listened and observed who else was showing up for these events. She paid attention to the questions they asked. Then no, she didn’t drop a “*let’s connect on LinkedIn [URL]*” message in the chat, rather, she took a deeper course of action, leading to

stronger connections. What Erin did when she began to see familiar faces at the same virtual events, was:

- to write down their name,
- to look them up online, and
- to follow their social channels.

Then, after determining through her super-sleuth Harriet-the-Spy internet efforts that this was someone she did want to talk to further (around their shared interest of non-profit theater production), she took the next step: when Erin saw them next at an online event, she'd slip into their DMs with a *"hey, we seem to be showing up at the same events, maybe we should talk offline"* message. FYI: no-one has responded negatively to Erin's outreach.

To nurture these conversations, so they have the possibility of being more than a lucky happenstance, Erin:

- Makes a concerted effort to share and comment on their social media posts, and
- Maintains an active social presence, including passing along information she knows these new connections can put to use in their ventures.

Strategies from Erin's experience you should adopt:

- Adopt a “why not try it” mentality. Overthinking rather than embracing curiosity about a new networking venue can often halt us in our tracks, (especially when a quick glance or recommendation doesn't reveal whether it (ultimately) will be the right networking choice).
- Seek real time feedback on your new networking efforts by asking yourself what's working, and what else you could possibly try.
- Remember that the best networking may come from simply watching and observing (aka being more curious).

¹ Find out more about Erin and The Seeing Place Theatre here:

<https://www.seeingplacetheater.com/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/erincronican/>

² With Broadway re-opening, Erin tells me there is still an audience along with the desire of some actors, to continue producing online or hybrid productions. She's discovered theater lovers for whom the traditional theater set-up is not an option, because of physical restrictions of the seating, timing of intermissions etc.. Her networking efforts will continue to tap into these unique communities as she, along side other not-for-profit theater companies, figure out what future online/offline formats - from play readings to full scale productions - will look like.

³Other ideas on ways to build new networks can be found in Build Your Dream Network (of course). Check out Varelie Croes' story (building a new network to pursue her entrepreneurial dreams) at page 109 and take a second look both Joe Styler's story at page 75 (building a new network both internally and externally to make a professional career change within his current employer) and Devon Brook's story at page 115 (shifting her interactions within an existing network, so key stakeholders would view her in a new light for board opportunities).

Block Generously

Back to bad networking behavior (briefly). I don't need to remind you that there is a lot of inhumane, cruel, appalling and unspeakably hideous behavior online, whether it is an army of spambots or an anonymous internet troll or an outspoken "celebrity" with a vocal, rabid following (whose views are different from your own). Then there is the irritating, obnoxious crap, such as:

- Spray and pray email pitches for services you don't need, want or desire.
- Requests to connect from someone you've never crossed paths with (until they landed in your LinkedIn inbox).
- The email (addressed to "J") in a folks-y tone (*"Look. I get it, who has time to read 32 pages when you're already wearing too many hats..."*) from the CMO of a site you've unsubscribed from 6X already.

I'm often asked "what to do" with networking outreach which fits in this crap category.

Simple.

Block generously.

Some people (or the bots they create) get off on bullying, taunting, inundating and traumatizing others. Others are arrogantly clueless² (back to the Ivy League educated dude in finance who reached out to a stranger with a "*your profile looks interesting, I'm seeking mentorship, let's talk, here's my Calendly to find a time*" message, I mentioned earlier). As I see it, why give any of these types of communications much space or energy when you can direct your networking energy towards the positive, productive relationships in your life?

Blocking is a practical approach. Your time is limited - actually, it's a finite resource. It is non-renewable. Once time is gone, it is gone. It's your choice how you choose to allocate your time (spend precious time investigating whether or not there is any value behind the communication (when the sender has shown absolutely no consideration to you!) or move on to focusing on mutually, respectful relationships).

Start with a delete if initially blocking seems too drastic (or you suffer from “what if’s!” as in “*what if they really are a useful connection! And I blow the chance to connect with them by blocking the messenger!*”). Then when (‘cause it is when, not if) the sender returns with another urgent voicemail warning that your auto insurance is about to expire or slides into your DMs with special offer to gain more followers on Instagram, you can block them (all the while asking yourself why you didn’t do this before).

Or, if you need more easing into a delete or block, send a very polite inquiry back to the sender of that random request to connect as Joyce Sullivan ³does. Joyce is a workforce transformation expert, social media enthusiast and SVP at Lee Hecht Harrison. Her protocol in these situations is to send a “*Thank you for reaching out. I’m curious why you believe we should connect?*” message. According to Joyce, nine times out of 10, the response is silence (not surprising!). But every once in a while, a gem of networking possibility occurs when the sender sends her a detailed response, outlining the reasons behind their initial, awkward “*I’d like to connect*” outreach.

¹ Check out pages 144-146 (To Connect or Not To Connect) in Build Your Dream Network and/or the post “Navigating The LinkedIn Cesspool’ on the Build Your Dream blog - <https://jkellyhoey.co/navigating-the-linkedin-cesspool-and-landing-a-post-college-dream-job/> and/or “Unsure Who To Accept or Reject On LinkedIn? Consult This Flowchart.” over on Quartz <https://qz.com/work/1213763/unsure-who-to-accept-or-reject-on-linkedin-consult-this-flowchart/>

² Keynote speaker, and New York Times best-selling author Alison Levine’s reaction to this mentorship request can be found in the Twitter thread - https://twitter.com/Levine_Alison/status/1448325709898805255?s=20 - plus you can read Alison’s networking case study starting at page 90 of Build Your Dream Network - where yes, she is rather vocal on how she feels when someone reaches out with a big ask (such as asking for a busy person’s time) when they have not done their “homework” first.

³ Joyce joined me on the Build Your Dream Network podcast to discuss her unexpected career reinvention - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/reinventing-your-career/id1478185228?i=1000474314282> - following the financial collapse in 2008. Joyce was also the inspiration behind the Build Your Dream blog post “Are You A “G” or A “T”? - <https://jkellyhoey.co/are-you-a-networking-giver-or-a-taker/>

Staying Connected - In Yoga Pants

"How do I get to someone? I figure it out." - Jessica Peltz-Zatulove

Not much has changed in Jessica's networking methodology¹ over the past 20 years. Sure, the tools she has at her disposal to tap into and expand her network have (more digital, less analog), but the foundation - tenacity, hustle and creativity to connect - remains solid. What has changed since Jessica shared her cold-emailing-network-building career story with me for Build Your Dream Network? Well, she's:

- Become a mom (again);
- Built a global database of women in venture capital;
- Left her corporate job;
- Launched a venture fund; and
- Successfully raised money from investors for her fund along with making new investments.

All of this during, or just prior to Covid.

You may be wondering just how you raise two kids
AND a venture fund in a virtual environment?

By being relentlessly organized and attentive to the
data.

Let's break this down by the key-relationships Jessica is
relying on, building and leveraging:

- Venture Fund (day-to-day operations)
- Investors (maintaining relationships)
- Venture Community (building connections)

Jessica is a founding partner in Hannah Grey alongside
Kate Beardsley. Launched in October 2020, Hannah
Grey is a first check venture capital fund, investing in
customer centric founders reimagining everyday
experiences to improve work and life. Jessica is based
in NYC, and Kate is in Denver - the founding partners
have not seen each other IRL for 20+ months.

Launching their fund, the day-to-day of operating a
fund, well, this has all been virtual. Jessica and Kate rely
heavily on Slack, WhatsApp, texts and good-old email
to get the job done.

They have also been relentlessly focused on building investor relationships for years² - enabling them to slide into a potential LP's DMs without it being really awkward or weird. And that my friends, is a networking lesson I will repeatedly highlight! People take calls, put their faith (and checks) in you when you have made a strong connection - which takes a bigger investment of time, than sending a single email, text or tweet. In short, build your network before you imagine you will ever need it!

To launch and scale their venture fund, Hannah Grey, Jessica and Kate have been relentlessly obsessive and thoughtful in building out their investor-relationship CRM using AirTable. Pouring over 20 years of startup community connections, combined with timely market research, to prioritize the relationships they need to foster (from the wording of their outreach to the timing of their approach). They are a vigilant, data-driven team: using facts, data and search to drive their networking results.

Whereas most people have experienced a reduction in the size of their networks during Covid, Jessica's has grown. Again, a tribute to her relentless focus on the connections needed, to excel in her chosen profession. As she described them to me, Jessica's networking

behaviors to expand her venture community network fall into three buckets:

- Real
- Digital
- Virtual

Real are the text groups on WhatsApp, made up of less than 10 contacts, who are connected by a common thread (new moms who are emerging fund managers). Typically invited in by 1 or 2 people she knows IRL, these intimate, niche groups are a place to grow long-term trust and greater familiarity, while gaining industry insights too.

Digital is where Jessica buckets her Women in VC Directory (a community of decision-makers in venture, connecting for deal flow and deal-making, which has grown to over 3,500 members globally). It is another sticky, connected niche community with a narrow “work” focus. With members located all over the globe, it has been digital-first business relationship building since its inception. Members message each in real time to syndicate deals and search for co-investors.

Virtual are the myriad of groups Jessica belongs to on Discord. The layer of anonymity (it’s a place to hear

what others are thinking and saying on disruptive technologies, such as NFTs) stalls relationship-building on an acquaintance level on the platform (which is just fine in her mind, as the strength of the platform is the information exchange and debating of ideas).

Jessica acknowledges all the communications (texts, emails, multiple group chats, Discord communities etc.) can quickly become overwhelming — if you haven't set boundaries. Her boundaries are prioritized by the information she's seeking and people she needs to connect with for her career (aka the “why” or purpose for networking³).

Another, honest aha! moment from this conversation with Jessica: there really is no magic solution to managing the necessary noise, beyond awareness and a finely-tuned to-do list. Note, I said “necessary” noise! Jessica is in an information centric, relationship driven industry. To stay on top of trends, build an investor pipeline AND an investment pipeline, she needs to stay tapped in to a variety of communities. Being highly networked is definitely a professional requirement (hazard?) for venture capitalists - and Jessica was aware of that long before she decided to launch a fund. The plus side of having to network so intensively, is at least

for the immediate future, she can continue to do it, from home, in yoga pants.

Pro-tip: Jessica was very candid in sharing her career networking process in Build Your Dream Network⁴. While more recently she has adopted new tools (Discord, AirTable, Slack etc.), Jessica still relies on an old favorite, LinkedIn. But here's the pro-tip! Jessica uses LinkedIn to find MUTUAL connections. She's not prowling around the platform sending cold-outreach messages to potential LPs. By the time she logs on, Jessica's already given thought to who she wants to meet - then she uses LinkedIn to source her way to a warm introduction.

Three more big BYDN takeaways from my conversation with Jessica:

- Building a network takes time and discipline.
- Adopt a mindset of fierce curiosity before you reach out to connect.
- Relationship history is critical, so play the long networking game!

¹ Jessica Peltz-Zatulove's career networking story is a featured case-study in Build Your Dream Network. Find it at page 59.

² I've previously profiled Kate for Forbes (Six Networking Lessons From The Venture Career of Kate Shillo Beardsley) - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyhoey/2019/05/12/six-networking-lessons-from-the-venture-career-of-kate-shillo-beardsley/?sh=317b73994ca8>

And shared information on the public launch of the women in VC directory in 2019 (though started by Jessica originally in 2015) in this Forbes post: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyhoey/2019/03/25/a-global-directory-aims-to-connect-women-in-venture-capital/?sh=738e4460a5ef>

³ If you've read Build Your Dream Network, you know I'm all about the 'why'! When there are only 24 hours in a day, you need to have clarity on what you're seeking to achieve, in order to determine the best route for achieving them. Find my discussion of the Why Filter first at pages 29 to 34 (then also read, pages 47-49, pages 103-105, pages 127-128 and pages 137-138).

Plus, over on the Build Your Dream blog, download the Why worksheet (for free!). <https://jkellyhoey.co/why-pages/>

⁴ Don't have a copy of Build Your Dream Network? Strongly suggest you get your copy for all the networking case-studies, including Jessica's. Order it from your favorite bookseller or find it online via bookshop.org.

Right Place, Right (Networking) Tactic

The first wave of Covid decimated Melissa Moore's nascent business. Melissa is a retail trainer and management consultant¹ to independent retailers plus Irish craft and design businesses. With retailers closed down, there were no "retail or craft customers" who needed Melissa's savvy sales growth or customer experience advice (or so she initially thought). After her initial panic, Melissa got down to work: researching her customer base (and their individual needs), reimagining her approach to finding new business² and somewhere in this process of sourcing information and support³, she fell upon Build Your Dream Network. From that point on, you could say, everything fell into place - or at least made a lot more networking sense.

Before picking up Build Your Dream Network, Melissa was intuitively following the process I lay out in the book⁴:

1. Figure out your goal (so you know where to focus your networking efforts);
2. Define the network who can most readily help you achieve your goal (or reach interim milestones on the way to reaching your ultimate goal); and
3. Decide the tactics that will enable you to connect with your desired audience (ie, the network you identified in 2 above).

Build Your Dream Network gave Melissa the confidence to move forward and execute her new business/business rebuilding plan. She'd "done her networking homework" - researching networks of shared interest (retail establishments), then zeroing in on a global community of women (she had even nabbed a 15 minute Zoom meeting with the founder of the community). All well and good AND what makes Melissa's story one you should take note of is this: once on the scheduled Zoom with the network's founder, Melissa quickly realized in her enthusiasm to join the club (so to speak), she hadn't dug nearly deep enough in her background research - so she quickly pivoted her networking approach for the meeting (and for engaging in the global community). Rather than jumping into pitch-to-impress presentation mode, she switched to observe and listen.

Funny how often in networking we worry about what to say when we should be worrying about how to listen!

Spending time observing and listening has paid off in spades for Melissa. Six months after being admitted into the community, Melissa's business was back on its feet, growing from word-of-mouth and direct recommendations. She's receiving business directly as a result of her new networking efforts along with referrals for speaking engagements and media appearances.

With the right approach, one Zoom can change your prospects. Here are the Build Your Dream Network takeaways from Melissa's success:

- **Timing is everything!** As Melissa shared with me, whether it's the subject matter (ie blogging about holiday shopping waaaaay back in September) or holding back from reaching out because your website isn't updated, pausing to reflect on the timing of a networking outreach is essential (and may just improve the networking outcome). You may have something to say (or share or pitch) but understanding when the other side is ready and able to receive it, is critical!

- **Pick the right networking “venue”, then go all in!** Really, I mean, really engage. Based on her audience research, Melissa realized that LinkedIn is where “her people hang out”. So, Monday through Friday, she’s made it part of her day job to hang out on the platform. No, she’s not mindlessly scrolling or sending template requests to connect! Rather, on days she posts an update or article, she stays around to interact with everyone who engages with her post (talk about being of service to your network!). Then, on non-posting days, she spends 20 minutes or so, engaging with the content of others. Melissa freely admits she’s not in love with LinkedIn⁵ as her primary networking venue, but she understands (again, based on her deep research) it is where she needs to be to connect with her audience (yeah, another reminder that networking is not all about you!).
- **Keep observing and listening!** The correct way to connect is not a list of 101 ice-breaker questions for every scenario or a standard template to insert when planning a new outreach. The correct way to connect will always reveal itself if you stop, listen and learn what others need or care about.

¹ Learn more about Melissa's business here: <https://theretailadvisor.ie/>

² Melissa's approach paid off! Six months into launching her business, the pandemic hit then four months after pivoting her approach to networking, she won the Emerging New Business at the Network Ireland Mayo Businesswoman of the Year Awards.

³ Two amazing sources of information and community support for women entrepreneurs who are based in Ireland are:

AwakenHub - <https://www.awakenhub.com/>

EMPOWER Programme at GMIT Innovation Hubs - <https://gmitihubs.ie/empower-2/>

Melissa and I have crossed paths virtually at both.

⁴ Jump to page 58 of Build Your Dream Network ("The Goal Comes First").

⁵ Love the honesty of BYDN interviewees - 'cause you don't want fluff or nonsense when it comes to networking your career or business. While Melissa may not be absolutely in love with LinkedIn, I do love her profile and how she leverages the platform. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mooremelissa1/>

Seeds Continue To Sprout

Since we last connected with Manisha Thakor,¹ she's merged her business, changed roles (2X) - moving from operations into thought-leadership - then as a gift to herself on her 50th birthday, she exited from the world of a W-2, re-entering entrepreneurship as a solopreneur².

What's enabling Manisha to seamlessly make these shifts and transitions in her career? Relationships, built over the first 25 years of her career.

OK! I can hear what you're thinking loud and clear - *"Kelly! I'm not 25 minutes into my career, and I don't have 25 years to wait!"* or *"Kelly! WTW does it take 25 years to make things happen???"* - and I want you to take a big, deep breath! Manisha's story falls squarely in the BYDN advice file of **"build your network before you need it"** (yes, I'm a broken record on this point!). Similar to Kathryn Finney's crowdfunding success story³, Manisha's career pivot is all about having the ability to turn to others for help because you've generously and

continuously contributed to their successes, both big and small, along the way.

Now back to Manisha's story.

Manisha has always approached networking as 'cultivating' relationships, connecting with people on a personal level (recall in *Build Your Dream Network* she shared how she hosted book-focused gatherings in her home, bringing together interesting people she'd met on the job, whom she believed would benefit from getting to know each other). Manisha's never felt she "needed" to ask her network for anything, until now (her network has been aware of her work and made word of mouth referrals for years). Choosing to undertake a career pivot in a pandemic however needed the power boost of a network. This change in career direction was not a decision Manisha wanted to make in isolation. So she sought input and insight from her trusted network, incorporating their feedback into the re-vamped next chapter of her career.

FYI: Your network (just like Manisha's) can't read your mind! It needs to be asked. It needs to be tapped!

Bringing your network along on your journey has multiple benefits:

- fresh insights;
- offering up alternatives you may have ignored, failed to notice or brushed off as impossible;
- affirmation of your course of action;
- recruitment of support for your new venture;
- warm introductions; and
- the list could go on.

For her new venture (she's re-set Money Zen[†] her prior entrepreneurial venture and newsletter), Manisha is relying solely on word-of-mouth referrals. In a world fixated on the 24/7 hustle, how refreshing to know a business can confidently launch with the stated strategy of no-outbound pitches! For those coveted referrals, Manisha is leaning in on:

- A women's business network she's been a member of for the past five years. The small group of busy professionals meets 2X a year at networking sessions with the stated goal of finding ways to help each other grow professionally.
- Relationships built as a result of an internal corporate network. The collective of women routinely met bi-weekly to amplify and problem solve for each other ("no whining!" was how

Manisha explained the gatherings to me). From this group, Manisha honed her skills in asking for what she needed help with and what achievements she needed amplified. This network introduced Manisha to the third network she's turning to heavily.

- The Athena Alliance⁵ activates knowledge, networks and opportunities for experienced executives. This network is proving to be pivotal to Manisha's pursuit of corporate board seats.

There are so many lessons from Manisha's career story, and here are my top two takeaways:

- Focusing on relationships is an authentic and powerful way to build lasting connections. Invest the time - from showing up consistently to paying attention and being responsive to the needs of others.
- Understand your network, once you've invested in it, wants to help you. Learn how to ask for help with precision and clarity so your network understands what it is you really need help with (or what you're hoping to achieve).

¹ Find Manisha's networked career story ("Connect Like An Introvert") at page 34 of Build Your Dream Network. It is jam-packed with ideas on how to grow a relationship-based business on your own terms.

² Manisha is making a decision not to grow her next venture into a company (she, like me, likes doing versus managing others who get to do all the doing). Recommended reading on this topic= - Company of One: Why Staying Small Is The Next Big Thing For Business by Paul Jarvis (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019)

³ Find Kathryn's interview on how she tapped her network for crowdfunding success at page 81 of Build Your Dream Network.

⁴ Check out Manisha's revamped website! <https://moneyzen.com/>

⁵ Learn more about The Athena Alliance here: <https://athenaalliance.com/>

Professional Organizations And The Pandemic

I don't know about you, but I saw a flurry of activity from professional organizations and industry associations in the months after Covid shut-down the "usual" activities of these groups. Gone were the mixers, replaced with multiple communications and online webinars ranging from dull to dubious to "this is great, why didn't they do this before now?". In other words, some groups made a relatively smooth transition to continuing to provide value to their community while others simply stumbled.

As online and/or hybrid appears here to stay, I reached out to the person I feel knows better than anyone the value of professional organizations (in good times and bad). If you've read Build Your Dream Network, then you may remember Jennifer Johnson, founder of Calibrate Legal (her story is at page 26) and how she moved to New York City to start a new job (and new line of business!.) not knowing a soul in the legal

marketing industry. By joining the relevant industry association - ok, not just joining, but showing up and rolling-up her sleeves - Jennifer has seen her career (now business) skyrocket.

I've sought out Jennifer's insights on the role of professional organizations in career development since publication of Build Your Dream Network¹, and now that she's "grounded" in Austin, Texas (and destination conferences are at a relative standstill), I tapped her for insights once again (as many of us weigh work vs personal commitments along with the "value" we expect in return after joining or attending work-related networking groups).

Me: I've seen many articles on the death of business travel. Is business travel for industry conferences, client meetings and gathering with professional peers even relevant or necessary anymore? What's the ROI for it?

Jennifer: I do think that traveling to meet clients and key contacts IRL is still highly impactful and necessary as a supplement to any ongoing engagement activities. It's really fun to sit at your desk and have a glass of wine with someone but it's a totally different experience when you can sit with someone in person. I've also noticed that it is very hard to read a room when you're not physically in it - there are several instances with clients in particular that I would have had a better

outcome in a conversation if we had been sitting across the table from one another.

Me: To connect effectively we do need to use all of our senses - and I agree, that can be challenging even with technology like Zoom. If the screen only shows a person's face, we miss the agitated foot tapping - aka the signal to cut the meeting short!

Jennifer: Exactly.

Me: I see that you've leaped into a high visibility leadership role (again) with the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) and you're 2022 Annual Conference Committee Co-Chair for the LMA. Why the heck did you personally want to take on the challenge of organizing a major gathering? You've taken on these leadership positions in the past with the LMA; why do it again now?

Jennifer: I'm a recruiter. I collect people for a living. My job is to find the best and brightest professionals who would be an asset to my client's talent strategy. In the past two decades I have met people from all types of industries and backgrounds and had the opportunity to curate content for my industry - all because I've been active in the relevant industry organization.

Capitalizing on the collective knowledge of my network was the ultimate appeal to take on this enormous task

(again). I enjoy bringing together people who might not otherwise have an occasion to be in the same room together. So, this is bringing that concept to life in a monumental way – bringing really smart people together to showcase their intellectual capital while getting to meet other smart people. It is a win:win for those in my network.

Me: What changed for you as it relates to networking over the past 20+ months?

Jennifer: As much as I am an introvert and enjoyed the fact that I could grab a drink with someone from the comfort of my own home (and be in their home which probably would have never occurred before!) I learned that I NEED to be out and about and meeting people where they are – in their environment. It fosters a connection that cannot be replaced.

Me: How did you continue to engage your community? Where did you find new connections (or did you try)?

Jennifer: For me it was a focus on engaging with those I already knew in a way that was best for them.

Me: “In a way that was best for them” - love this!

Jennifer: The lockdown gave us an opportunity to be in people’s homes for the first time in many instances which was a treat – I got to meet kids, pets, spouses and

other loved ones. I got to see art collections and cool kitchen tiles and views from patios. While being physically so far apart we got to grow closer through a level of intimacy that was not achievable prior to the lockdown. I used to look at pictures of people's kids on their phones. Now I say hello and talk to their Barbie dolls.

Me: The unexpected intimacy, vulnerability and empathy. What else surprised you?

Jennifer: The shared humanity – no one was excluded from the experience of the pandemic.

Me: I have to ask, when this is all over, what will you not return to?

Jennifer: Thinking I 'HAVE' to do anything. There are only a few things I HAVE to do in life (eat, sleep, ensure my children's safety, etc) – the rest are choices. I will choose what is the best use of my time and only take other's time if it is mutually beneficial.

Me: "Only take other's time if it is mutually beneficial" - another mic drop comment! But I can't leave it there. One last question: How will you network differently IRL off-screen when the pandemic is an endemic?

Jennifer: I am planning to bring together people IRL - people who I separately had orchestrated gathering

online with during the pandemic. I think they will love to meet each other. Usually I am a one-to-one kind of networking gal but the future will be more groups.

¹ Check out the Build Your Dream Network podcast interview with Jennifer (on building a new network).

Key takeaways:

(a) When you initiate networking meetings, focus on relationship building and have the mindset of “I want to get invited back.”

(b) Don’t only reach out when you need your networking connections, you have to consistently maintain your networking relationships.

(c) Get involved in industry associations. Actively participate and align your volunteer work with your professional goals.

<https://jkellyhoey.co/how-to-build-a-new-network-with-jennifer-johnson/>

From One Day, One Event To Healthy Community

New York City based not-for-profit, Sober St. Patrick's Day® ("SSPD") is on a mission to reclaim the true spirit of St. Patrick's Day, annually hosting (until 2020 stepped in) a family-friendly event celebrating Irish arts and culture in a church basement - on a day generally associated with gleefully being over-served. One mission, one day, one event all sidelined by the pandemic.

No party, no non-profit, right?

If SSPD had rigidly stuck to the "one day, one IRL event" vision, then in all likelihood, yes.

Instead, in June 2020 they hired an executive director (Tami Ellen McLaughlin¹) with fresh perspectives - and

different networks - freeing the organization from its solo “event” focus, so it could embody its mission, fully.

A critical hire (first executive director) at a critical juncture in the organization’s history (in 2021, SSPD would be celebrating its 10th anniversary) was a good time to take stock of their community engagement (with or without a disruptive global event - but why waste the opportunity presented by a disruptive global event to rethink how to engage a community). It’s great to have a niche audience (families that want to celebrate St Patrick’s Day by immersing themselves in Irish arts and culture in an accessible Manhattan location on the Upper East Side) but what the logistical realities of Covid did was reveal a much bigger, global audience who shared the same values (*“changing the perception and experience of St. Patrick’s Day from an occasion for binge drinking to a celebration of Irish culture”*).

Directly a result of the pandemic, the SSPD team:

- Stepped back from a “1 party on 1 day’ mindset (‘cause clinging to that networking format was foolish or impossible to execute against given Covid gathering rules).

- Examined what they “really” were (moving from a community seeking an alcohol-free party environment to a community focused on staying healthy).
- Pushed themselves to think bigger as to the community they serve (not just NYC, but the global diaspora of Irish citizens and those of Irish descent).

SSPD 10th anniversary event was virtual. Their audience (and talent) celebrating Irish arts and culture in a healthy format, was global. With healthy community front-and-center, the organization launched a running club (in-person along with remote participation options), marking 5K SSPD events to the countdown to March 17, 2022. The pandemic forced organizational change, revealing new ways to engage, new content to share in their newsletter and (really critically for a not-for-profit) new sponsorship prospects. All healthy outcomes for SSPD.

No doubt about it, the pandemic was a bit of a blessing in disguise for the organization (and perhaps, others like it). Reading this, you could be scratching your head, thinking it is all rather obvious - but when you're

stuck in your own networking weeds (and things are ticking along quite nicely - venue is booked, sufficient sponsors to underwrite the event have sent their checks etc), why go through the hassle of switching things up? What's the urgency? I'm not suggesting you switch networking things up for the sake of it. Just disrupt your networking autopilot. How do you do that? Start by purposefully questioning (with intent) the pro's + cons of continuing to network the way you have in the past and understanding the consequences of not expanding your networks and/or networking activities. Switching it up could prevent a networking catastrophe in the future! And isn't examining your current networking assumptions, actions and outcomes today better than scrambling to recover from an avoidable networking failure in the future?

Here are my SSPD Build Your Dream Network takeaways for you:

- Recognize when you may be hindered by your past successes.
- Consider whether you're underserving your existing network.

- Expand your networking activities when it makes sense and in ways that make sense for you.

¹Tami Ellen and I first connected at the Irish Consulate in New York City, during a Build Your Dream Network book launch event hosted by the Consulate together with the IIBN (Irish International Business Organization). Tami came up to me with a copy of Build Your Dream Network borrowed from the New York Public Library in her hand. THIS was how I learned my book was in the collection of the New York Public Library. I cried, we made an immediate connection and yes, I sent Tami her own copy of Build Your Dream Network.

Tami is an active and generous tweeter! Find her on Twitter (and tell her I sent you): <https://twitter.com/auntytem>

Walks, Talks And Teams: Conversation with Ian Sanders

Ian Sanders's career story is one grounded in curiosity. He's worked in local radio for the BBC, launched a marketing business (accidentally), co-managed a band, written for the Financial Times, worked backstage at The World Economic Forum in Davos - then there is an odd career moment when Ian had to stand guard during a lengthy meeting to ensure a floor lamp didn't topple (somehow?) on the head of a certain heir to the British throne. All cool stuff, and the backdrop to leading Ian to where he is today: a storyteller who helps leaders create change. He's also the author of five books (his latest, [365 Ways To Have A Good Day](#) is filled with life-enhancing habits pulled from the journals Ian has kept throughout his marvelous, meandering career).

Given Ian's work with global teams, I sought his insights on structuring team interactions to develop cohesion and collaboration at this time when pretty

much everyone was working remotely (also when team-building activities such as off-sites or away-days are highly unlikely for the foreseeable future).

Me: What did you discover from your conversations with leaders about how they approached leading/ managing in this new work environment?

Ian: Well, I noticed a lot of experimentation.

Me: Such as?

Ian: Teams - and their leaders - tried different things to connect meaningfully. I saw a leader who was onboarded remotely during Covid. She'd never met her team IRL. So she started a weekly or regular online 'coffee and cake' video meeting open to all. Business chat was strictly off limits so there was no pressure for anyone to attend. If you couldn't make it, you wouldn't miss anything important. But if you could make it, people loved it. Just sharing stories about their personal lives. That natural storytelling was like a fast-track to building trust and relationships within those teams. I know another leader who did a daily 30-minute video call with his team. He told me he was trying to replicate those interactions that happen naturally in the workplace, you get into the office, lean against someone's desk tell them how the tube was delayed or what you did last night. And then you drift into the serious stuff! He told me he only intended it as a two-

week experiment. So when he removed the calendar invite his team said '*woaaaah - we loved that daily all-hands call.*' He thought it might be too much of a calendar burden having it everyday. But people missed it. So he kept on doing it.

Me: I love that leaders were prepared to experiment and approach technology with a real "human" moment in mind. Any particular tools that were better equipped for fostering these interactions?

Ian: None in particular popped up in conversations that I took note of.

Me: Guess it just comes down to intent - and consistency!

Ian: Precisely.

Me: From your conversations, were there activities or processes that work better when conducted remotely? I recall listening to a podcast interview with a professor who didn't realize how much he hated IRL (in a boardroom) thesis review sessions until they had to conduct these reviews over Zoom - now he swears he will only conduct this task via Zoom!

Ian: Sure, I guess some meetings are more effective when conducted remotely. I find this as an independent consultant. Whilst I still appreciate the value of in-

person meetings, I really see no reason why I should travel from one side of London to another for say a thirty minute meeting on a project. We should always do those online!

Me: Back to hiring during Covid. For teams who made new hires during Covid, how did they manage that, the on-boarding and integration?

Ian: I saw lots of leaders who made new hires during Covid and I think it was hard for both parties. You have to be more intentional about the onboarding process, it certainly needs to be more comprehensive to try to plug the knowledge gaps. But of course you can't attempt to replicate those natural unscheduled interactions in the workplace that happen when a new hire starts. It's hard! A HR manager hired me for a talk recently. She'd been onboarded remotely and had never been in the office before September. When I asked her in August about the culture of the company, she found it hard to answer because she hadn't been fully immersed in it.

Me: It is hard to get a pulse on the company if everyone is hiding behind a screen and approaching the tech purely as tech. Switching gears now, I want to focus on you and your networking during Covid. What changed for you? Anything unexpected?

Ian: Well I managed to make tons of NEW high-level relationships with leaders. I managed to build many

new relationships during this time. The fact that they were global - and not based in London - really helped. Because even without Covid, we'd have probably met online - and done business online - too.

Me: Wow! Most people (according to a Pew study) felt they were unable to build deeper connections with new contacts. So, keep going. I need to know more.

Ian: Here's my story.

I remember the afternoon clearly. Friday 13th March 2020. I'd just emerged from a lunch in Soho and switching my phone back on, I soon realized that the next few months of projects I had lined up was about to change radically. Because in the space of just a few days, most of my projects were canned, or mothballed.

And I'd be lying if I said I had a big plan of what to do next.

Looking back there were two factors that contributed to my business growth.

One - a desire to go global. Even before Covid hit, I'd already said to myself it was time to shake up my business and raise my game. I'd decided to be more intentional about working with leaders and teams globally. I was already starting to change the language of how I communicate and position the business, to

resonate more with the C-suite. I'd engaged a copywriter. I'd hired a designer to create a new logo.

Two - my lockdown side projects. With client projects canned, suddenly I had time on my hands. So in April 2020 I decided to get busy with two side projects. The first was 'The Unplanners,' a weekly YouTube series with an old collaborator of mine where we riffed on the changing world we found ourselves in. The second was a YouTube series 'Meet The Storytellers' where I interviewed leaders about the role of storytelling in their work. Let me be clear - there was no grand plan. I was just following my curiosity, enjoying the chance to have interesting conversations and share them online. But looking back, these gave me visibility. A new body of work to get a global reputation for.

Across the summer of 2020 I was prolific sharing these outputs and engaging on LinkedIn and social media. And at the same time, I kept in touch with leaders in my sights. No hard sell. Just dropping them a line, staying in touch. So by the end of the summer I had repositioned myself as a subject matter expert on a global stage. And that led to some interesting approaches, referrals and recommendations. Those leaders I'd kept in touch reached out with opportunities or passed my name along to their colleagues.

95% of my work in 2021 has been delivering projects remotely, globally. And because the world was working

remotely, I guess leaders were more open about hiring consultants/experts from anywhere in the world.

So 2020 was always the year I wanted to make major change in my business - it's just that the reality was harder than I anticipated. It's been quite a journey, creating these new revenue streams, designing online programmes, mastering digital tools, rebuilding the business. I've learned a lot. I've changed a lot. It's taken me to where I want to be.

Me: The power of aligning actions with your intention. How did you continue to engage your community? Where did you find new connections?

Ian: I found new connections via LinkedIn, via following people online (and then reaching out with one-to-one human approaches!), even bumping into people on Instagram and making a relationship out of it. A tweet from Cali in Boulder, Colorado led me to reach out about a Zoom and now we have a great relationship where we connect every month or so just to riff on work and what's on our mind. I like making connections like that, with kindred spirits across the Atlantic.

Me: Always lovely to bump into kindred spirits when we're scrolling through the digital universe. Anything that surprised you in all this?

Ian: I thought I'd miss all those London days when I'd meet random folk for coffees. And whilst I need some of that curiosity-led networking in my life, actually I don't miss a lot of that. It takes a lot of time and effort. An hour coffee with some dude who wants to meet me? Could be amazing! Could be amazingly dull and a waste of time. Whereas if you do that via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, it's just a more efficient waste of half an hour if it doesn't work out.

Me: What will you not return to when some of this chaos eventually winds down?

Ian: So many random coffees.

Me: And you do love your coffee! That is saying a lot.

Ian: I'll take more care over where I put my attention and who I reach out to and who I want to build relationships with. I'll be more INTENTIONAL.

Me: You know I love that last answer! Thanks Ian.¹

¹ Learn more about Ian's work, pick up a copy of his new book "365 Ways To Have A Good Day" and connect with Ian here <https://www.iansanders.com/>

A Few Final Thoughts...

There is no single “right” way to network - other than not being a jerk (which is the answer I give when someone asks me what the secret to networking is). If there really were “10 ways to network successfully”, I’d have sent you a checklist of networking hacks and to-do’s and told you to follow the list faithfully. Oh, if it was only that easy (come on! the events of the past 20+ months only emphasized just how weird and unpredictable many of us can be). Without a universal networking formula, you’re left to your own methods. You need to find ways to connect (and to stay connected) with your network that work uniquely for you - your goals, your availability, your schedule, etc. (along with generosity and consistency of course!).

Lessons to take away:

- You have choices in how to connect, plus when, where and what you want to take on.
- Be curious. Do your research. Prepare, then reach out with confidence.

- Be intentional, as there are still only 24 hours in a day.

I conceived of this #BYDN book birthday bonus as a way to highlight how others are navigating “this period of time” we’re in, to encourage or fortify or disrupt your own network-building efforts. I am chuckling as I write this, as a negative book review comment pops to mind. The reviewer wasn’t happy with Build Your Dream Network as it was “*filled with stories of people with successful networks*”. I think they missed the point. No one I interviewed started out with the social advantage of a platinum rolodex (if you don’t know what a rolodex is, Google it). The point of sharing case studies back in 2017 (and again now), is to illustrate how regular people have networked to make their career dreams a reality.

Successful people build networks continuously - or as I said in Build Your Dream Network: **ideas without a network are just ideas.**

Put in the work of networking - it will pay off! I swear.

Do I have more examples to share? You bet. There’s the attorney who took a temporary, 9-month contract position (a sideways career move) as the traditional informational interview career-change networking route was proving to be too difficult (as well as time

consuming) during Covid. By embedding herself within an organization, the attorney can network her skills by “doing the work” and network her ambition “on the job” by making the new connections she needs to move her career ahead in the near future. Another success story is the leadership coach who has taken to Twitter, generously executing a dynamic and informative weekly Twitter chat - and growing her influence within an expanded network of new contacts. Seek out #LeadLoudly on Twitter on Thursdays at 7:00 pm Eastern to see what I’m raving about (plus tell @nathaliegregg I sent you). If I leap across the pond from where I sit in New York City to Ireland, there’s a dynamic group of change-makers (entrepreneurs, investors, innovators - these women wear many many hats) who took an idea they’d been tossing around for years (leveling up the opportunities for women entrepreneurs across Ireland), and finally launched it. Awakenhub welcomed 70 women to their first online event in July 2020 (their community is now over 1400, and online events are regularly “sold-out”). Not content to simply be an event and community platform, Awakenhub launched Awakenclub to connect a curated, niche sub-group of women entrepreneurs (those who have already successfully scaled their ventures) and then (yes, just like an infomercial, there is more!) in November 2021, they launched SheGenerates a business incubator/ accelerator for newbie entrepreneurs with a cohort of 56 female founders (up from the original target of 35 participants). Then there are the embassies

who opened their (virtual) doors connecting with wider audiences interested in arts, film, food, music and culture. Sound like your crowd? Find out what's going in the embassies in Washington D.C. by following @DiploGlobal on Twitter.

So yes, I have many more networking stories to share (from the continued growth of Digital UnDivided under new CEO Lauren Maillian to serial entrepreneur Patrick Sullivan's new mentorship platform Bonsai to how the Bright Network pivoted and delivered virtual internship experiences to over 100,000 students to the expansion of the Innovation Collective into new communities...), but those will have to wait, for a blog post or live-streaming virtual water-cooler conversation or maybe, a revised and fully updated edition of Build Your Dream Network (sometime in the future when we're less socially-distanced and the choice to host virtual or hybrid gatherings is one determined by the desires of our communities, how they wish to engage and connect, rather than being necessitated because of an ongoing global health crisis).

In the meantime, let's stay connected. I'd love to know your networking story. What's working for you? Find me on Twitter (@jkhoey) or Instagram (@jkellyhoey).





THIS
Happened

Keenya Hofmaier

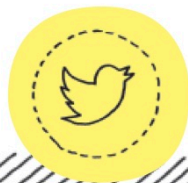
@its_keenya



On the top of Keenya Hofmaier's list: **Build Your Dream Network**. Keenya is based in Paris – however, her career journey started in Chicago. She's a graduate of Northwestern University. A teaching fellowship lured her away from Chicago for three "challenging, but rewarding, years" (her description) working in New York City. Her next career stop? Paris, France - for the "joie de vivre" (she says!) plus a Master in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from Sorbonne Université Paris Cité.

Build Your Dream Network inspired Keenya's self-published book **30-Day Connect**. Keenya truly shares a #BYDN mindset when it comes to building relationships: start with who you already know or could know, if you said smiled or said hello or paused a quick minute to introduce yourself to a neighbor, classmate or fellow commuter.

How has Build Your Dream Network inspired you?



#BYDN #DREAMNETWORK

About the Author

J. Kelly Hoey is the author of Build Your Dream Network: Forging Powerful Connections In A Hyper-Connected World (Tarcher Perigee/Penguin Random

House). Kelly's ideas on how we can connect more meaningfully in a 24/7 world of swipes, clicks, pins and tweets have appeared in a wide range of publications including Forbes, Fast Company, The New York Times,

Good Morning America, Real Simple, AARP, The Wall Street Journal, Vogue and Brit & Co. (+ on a variety of podcasts, including her own). She is a member of the National Speakers Association and represented by PRH Speakers Bureau.



Five years in...and if you have *yet* to read Build Your Dream Network, then isn't it about time you gave your ambition a boost by picking up a copy from your favorite bookseller or online via bookshop.org (or from Amazon, which of course, carries it).

Seeking multiple copies for your team, class, book club or event? Order via torchlightbooks.com or contact Penguin Random House directly (customer service: 1-800-733-3000 or customerservice@penguinrandomhouse.com).

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