



CAREER MINUTE



## Are You “Top of Mind?” 10 Practical Tips to Get People to Remember You

[By Meredith O'Connor]

Given how much time most of us spend on email, we may think we are over-communicating with everyone. However, the truth is that easy access to someone's email address doesn't guarantee that we are communicating purposefully with the people who can make or break our careers. Whether you need to be top of mind with clients, referral sources, or people inside your company who can help you move ahead, you can be sure of one thing: they probably receive dozens, if not hundreds, of emails per day.

How do you know that your communication isn't being lost in all the rest of the junk in their inboxes? How can you truly be the one they think of when someone asks who would be best for a given project or duty?

The secret to being *top of mind* is knowing how to artfully communicate with key people, and doing it on a regular basis. This isn't rocket science. It's about being in touch in a memorable way, and staying in touch routinely.

In our office, we keep note cards on our desks. This is a constant reminder that we need to be writing personal notes. If we see an article in the newspaper about someone, we write a note to say congratulations. If it's been a while since we've been in touch, we send a quick note to see how they are doing. If we see an article that would be interesting to them, we send it.

Bill is a bright consultant with a great reputation as an expert in his field. Part of the reason he came to us, was that he just couldn't land enough business. He hated making cold calls. Yes, he had some nice relationships, but he couldn't find time to keep up with them. There were people he hadn't spoken to in years. He and his boss were both frustrated.

Bill understood the concept of referral sources. He was a friendly, likeable guy, but the “staying in touch” piece always fell off his to-do list, a victim of all the project work he had to do. And, so much time had passed that he was almost embarrassed about getting in touch with people again. Would they even be interested in hearing from him?

One thing Bill needed to realize was that it's (almost) never too late to get back in touch. People understand — they themselves are having a hard time keeping up.

We made a list, and he started calling and emailing old friends. Immediately there was a payoff. Within a few months he had landed a couple of significant clients — all through his old contacts. In one case, an old friend whom he hadn't talked with in several years referred him to another company. This never would have happened if Bill hadn't reached out, overcoming his awkwardness.

The timing was perfect. A connection was made. He was ecstatic. Here's some reality about referrals, as well as opportunities within your company: you will never know that the conversation has happened — until *after the fact*. You will never know your boss was looking for someone to take on a big project — until *after you get the call*. You will never

know a major company was looking for someone like you — until *your referral puts in a good word for you*. Staying in touch is something you do, before you know exactly why you should. By the time the opportunity pops up, it's too late to become top of mind. As Bob Burg says in *Endless Referrals: Network Your Everyday Contacts Into Sales* (McGraw Hill), “...all the people in our network are also part of other people's networks that we ourselves don't personally know. And that, indirectly, makes each of those people part of our network, too.” The cycle goes on, and on, and on.

Here are some tips to get started right now so that you'll always keep in touch with important VIPs and referral sources, and be top of mind:

1. Order 500 note cards with your name on them right now and put them on your desk in a place where you can see them. Having them in front of you will remind you to get in contact with people.
2. Write and mail at least three handwritten notes per week. Three per week equals 12 to 15 per month, which means about 150 contacts per year who are likely to remember your name and your business!



CAREER MINUTE

3. Search the papers, trade journals, and business publications for reasons to congratulate people: promotions, awards, etc.
4. A note doesn't have to be long. "Congrats" or "Kudos" with your name at the bottom of a handwritten note is all it takes.
5. Make your emails less routine— look for ways to make them more conversational, use catchy words, etc. Refer to our Ask the Pro expert Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts for tips on the importance of compelling subject lines in emails.
6. Send small gifts whenever you can! We send a copy of our book, *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results*, and a *Speak Like a CEO Toolkit* (a 6-CD set) to any new contacts we make. We call the book our "big business card."
7. Write a note inviting someone to attend an event with you. If you know that a colleague is looking for ways to get more business, invite him/her to a networking event he or she might not know about.
8. Look for ways to help people outside of business. If, at a social event, someone mentions they need a new landscaper, send them a note with the contact information for your landscaper. Every time they look at their beautiful new yard, they'll think of you!
9. Introduce people by email to someone you believe they would like to know, or tell them about a person who could be a resource to them.
10. And here's a no-brainer: refer business to others! Write both parties and tell them you want to introduce them to each other. (Just remember: only do this if you actually value the person's services.

*Never* refer business just because you're hoping to get a referral in return.)

Take a lesson from Bill and try not to get frustrated if you don't see immediate results from your efforts. Staying in touch and becoming top of mind is the result of lifelong habits you can start today. Integrate them into your business life, and eventually it all comes back to you.

**About the Author**

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