

# The Business Connector

A Quarterly Newsletter from AmSpirit™ Business Connections

## Networking Arithmetic

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It is the final third of the age-old educational “trifecta” – reading, writing, and arithmetic. Kindly referred to as “mathematics” or better known as just plain old math. No doubt, this sector of our schooling was a seemingly endless flow of rules, theorems and axioms.

There are even numbers and odds. There are prime numbers and composites. There are square roots, fractions and the Pythagorean Theorem. And this is all before high school.

For some of us mathematics was the source of a great sense of achievement. For others of us it was the bane of our existence. And for the rest, we were somewhere in between.

Whether we were good, bad or indifferent to our math experience, there are certain things for which we are sure, like zero times any number equals zero or one plus one equals two.

Another such given is that if we subtract a larger number from a smaller one, we get a negative number. This particular kernel of knowledge, however, does not wash with the general axiom of successful networking: “We need to give more than we expect to get.”

Based on this, conventional wisdom would dictate that as we networked ourselves eventually we would be bankrupt. However, we know this not to be the case. In fact, it is just the opposite – following the axiom leads to prosperity. How can this be?

The primary reason for this anomaly can be summed up by making use of a simple

cliché’. In networking, “one person’s trash is another person’s treasure.” In short, to each of us the value of what we give simply does not have the same value as what we get. This is because much of what we give has little real value to us.

Consider for example if we referred a house-hunting relative to a trusted real estate agent friend. What are we really out? Answer: Nothing beyond a little time.

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To the two we have connected, however, we have conveyed real value. To our relative, we have given a valuable ally in the stressful real estate acquisition process. To our friend, we have referred on a client that is potentially worth thousands in future business and referrals. When we give a little time of ourselves and combine these two people, we almost magically create money and peace of mind.

This is incredibly powerful stuff. The gist behind it is that what we give in networking as compared to what we get are not really exchanges of like-kind items. What we have to offer is really just ‘trash’ in our hands and what we get in return is usually great ‘treasure.’

So we can continually undertake the networking process, give to others, and do nothing but advance ourselves. An illustration of this can be found in the exploits of Kyle MacDonald – a

26-year-old Montreal man who bartered a red paper clip for a house.

Of course, this was not accomplished in a single trade nor did it happen in a single day. Rather it took almost a year and 14 trades. But in the end, Kyle had a two-story farmhouse.

In the summer of 2005, Kyle let the world know on the Internet that he was attempting to own a house by trading up from his starting position – just a red paper clip. Almost immediately his sole possession was traded to a pair of women who saw more value in the paper clip (along with the novelty of starting the process) than the fish-shaped pen they owned.

Then a Seattle potter saw more value in the pen than the handmade doorknob he had. And similar logic followed as the doorknob was exchanged for a camp stove. This was then traded for a 100-watt generator, which fetched an illuminated Budweiser sign, which then garnered a snowmobile.

From here, Kyle secured an afternoon with rock star Alice Cooper and then traded it for a KISS snow globe. This item had great value in the eye of actor Corbin Bernsen, who exchanged it for a paid movie role. Finally, Kipling, Saskatchewan offered a farmhouse in exchange for the role in the movie.

Like the exchange process of networking, in the story of the red paper clip house, each step along the way, people saw less value in what they had and more value in what they could get by giving.

Networking arithmetic is a whole different breed of math. The rules allow you to part with a lot and yet end up with a whole lot more in return. ♣

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