

Title: Professional Development Through Networking.

Authors: Timothy M. Osberg and Michael L. Raulin
Niagara University SUNY at Buffalo

The central theme of this presentation will be that professional development can be greatly enhanced through the use of effective networking. *Networking* is defined as "the set of strategies academic psychologists use to increase their visibility among and interactions with other professionals" (Osberg & Raulin, 1989, p.26). Acknowledging that other fields such as business and industry have emphasized the development of networking skills, we will describe several networking techniques the academic psychologist might use toward the goal of enhancing professional development.

Several networking techniques will be described including: joining professional organizations, attending conventions (wherein several -specific networking techniques will be discussed), communicating with colleagues at other institutions, and the use of collaboration. Anecdotal examples of how the authors' own networking techniques have contributed to their professional development will be included as a part of the presentation.

Reference

Osberg, T.M., & Raulin, M.L. (1989). Networking as a tool for career advancement among academic psychologists. *Teaching of Psychology*, 16, 26-28.

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Boston, August, 1990.

Professional Development Through Networking

First of all, I just want to indicate that the co-author of my presentation is Michael Raulin from the State University of New York at Buffalo, whose name was inadvertently left out of the convention program.

I'm here to talk about networking and the role that it can play in professional development. Bear in mind that the comments you will hear come from someone whose networking will probably be cut down considerably now that I am a newlywed as of one month ago today. Drew said we should feel very free to be personal in our presentations!

I guess our ideas about professional development are from a little bit of a different perspective than that which is usually taken. On the surface, it would seem that we have taken an "instrumental" view of professional development in the sense that we have emphasized that an important process in achieving professional development is the ability to get oneself out among one's colleagues, to increase one's circulation within the professional arena, to put one's work before others. In a sense, we believe that to develop professionally, one has to get out and circulate within one's profession.

It may appear that we're promoting the notion of simply attempting to go out and make a name for oneself. But the process of networking while it in fact does this, can also directly or indirectly improve or enhance one's work, and hence one's professional development.

Because I have referred to terms like *networking* and *professional development*, some definitions are in order. They're also in order because Drew asked us each to provide our own view of what professional development is, as there is no universally agreed upon definition at this time. On the overhead, we've offered our definitions of professional development and networking.

See Overhead 1

In looking at the definitions, it is our view that networking provides *one* important means toward the end of professional development.

What I hope to do for the remainder of my presentation is to briefly survey some networking techniques and then *get personal*, according to Drew's instructions, to describe some of the kinds of tangible professional development benefits that can derive from a little networking. I want to disclaim any notion that I'll be citing myself as a model networker, for I'm far from that. Rather, the networking techniques I'll describe should be viewed as strategies even someone such as myself who fights shyness can use to increase his or her interactions with one's colleagues.

See Overhead 2

This next overhead represents a brief selection of some effective networking strategies that is by no means exhaustive but provides some ideas. All of you here are undertaking the first strategy to some extent. But as you can see, the mere presence at a convention alone does not insure good networking. You have to make an effort to meet people, to feel free to discuss their work, to show

your interest in it, and to let them know about your work and how it might interest them. We've indicated that poster sessions are an ideal way to meet other professionals and expand one's network, whether you are a participant or simply attending a session. The exchange of ideas and formation of new contacts is also greatly aided by exchanging copies of your work with others. Finally, social hours, *avoided like the plague by many*, are a particularly good way to get to know other professionals with related interests. Thus, conventions provide one of the best avenues for effective networking available and there are numerous regional and national conventions one might attend. Joe Palladino will be elaborating on a particularly useful type of convention to attend as one pursues one's professional development goals.

By "other communications with colleagues" we mean that, aside from the convention trail, the mail system and the telephone provide other mechanisms through which one can network. Even in this day of easy xeroxing, it's still a good idea to send reprint requests. It lets people know who you are and that you're interested in their work. Writing letters to researchers in your area to indicate your interest in their work and sending out copies of your work to those doing similar work are also effective networking strategies.

Another useful bit of advice to improve one's networking can be put simply: *Collaborate!* By working with others on research and writing projects, or to organize convention symposia, you'll get a chance to meet their colleagues and further expand your network of professional contacts. This is especially true in collaboration with senior professionals who often already have extensive networks of professional contacts.

So much for our brief review of some networking strategies.....now on to some concrete and personal examples of the professional development benefits of networking...

See Overhead 3

This overhead represents a selective compilation of some of the benefits Mike and I feel we have derived from our networking efforts. This table represents our effort to show how effective networking, which really is just a process with no direct bearing on professional development, can lead to outcomes that do provide benefits enhancing one's professional development.

The left column of the table represent the outcome we feel derived from our networking efforts, with the right column indicating the associated professional development benefit. In the process of our networking we have met some journal editors and consulting editors who subsequently asked us to review manuscripts for their journals. Each of us has also been asked to be a consulting editor for a journal. The benefits derived by us from these outcomes include improvements in our own research and writing, and, greater knowledge of the editorial review process, specifically, what gets manuscripts accepted and rejected.

Each of us also attributes, at least in part, our being asked to write chapters for edited books and the acceptance of a co-authored book proposal, in Mike's case, to some of our networking efforts. The benefit derived was a greater knowledge of the research areas we were asked to write about.

Next, I was asked a few months ago to write an instructor's manual for an introductory psych text due to come out next spring and I directly attribute it to contacts made through my own networking. The corresponding benefit is that it has increased my knowledge of the textbook publishing process, and has revitalized my contact with introductory psychology. I'm also hoping that it will be a foot in the door into the world of textbook publishing, which our next presenter, Wayne Weiten, whose been very successful within this realm, will be telling us about next.

Finally, in some ways, I feel my being asked to be on this panel, came about though my *work* on networking.....and the associated benefit, *Boston*, is obvious.

Some Definitions

Professional Development:

The enhancement of one's professional skills; raising one's professional output to the highest level possible.

Networking:

The set of strategies psychologists use to increase their visibility among and interactions with other professionals (Osberg & Raulin, 1989, *ToP*, p. 26).

Some Networking Strategies

Attending Conventions

Introduce yourself to others (Poster sessions are ideal)

Offer copies of your paper to others and ask for theirs

Social Hours

Other Communications with Colleagues

Send Reprint Requests

Write Letters to Researchers in Your Area

Send Copies of Your Research Out

Collaboration

In Writing Articles

In Organizing Convention Symposia

With Senior Faculty

Professional Development Benefits of Networking (some concrete and personal examples)

Outcome	Benefit
Asked to do journal manuscript reviews	Improved own research and writing
Asked to be a consulting editor for journal	Increased knowledge of journal review process and improved research and writing
Asked to write book chapter; co-authored book	Improved understanding of the literature
Asked to write instructor's manual for Intro Psych text	Increased knowledge of text publishing process; increased knowledge of and contact with all areas of intro psych
Asked to be on this panel	Boston!