

Robert: Hi, everyone. This is Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing and the Action Plan Marketing Club. This is an expert interview with Diane Darling of Effective Networking.

As principle consultant for Effective Networking, Diane founded the company on the premise that everyone can learn to network, they just need to find their own style. Combining interactive training, strategic planning and an exploration of the natural fears of networking, Darling demystifies the process by providing techniques that can be immediately implemented. She has received rave reviews for her seminars and speeches. She is increasingly sought out as an expert resource on the subject of networking.

I met Diane at one of my summer workshops in 2008. She has written a book called *The Networking Survival Guide*, which was published in 2003 and has gone through a number of printings. I looked through it and felt that it was the best overall how-to networking guide I had ever seen. It has everything you need to network.

Today, we're going to talk about Diane's networking formula. Welcome to the call, Diane. I really look forward to this interview.

Diane: Robert, this is such a pleasure. You're certainly a legend in the marketing world. It was a delight to meet you this summer. I'm so happy to work with you on this project.

Robert: Diane's formula is called the DARLING Formula. We're going to go through the headings for it and talk about

each one. I'll ask Diane questions, and she'll present certain points and ideas that she's found to be the most important for networking success.

The first thing in your DARLING Formula is D, Define networking. What is it really, why does it matter and what is it all about?

Diane: When they hear the word “networking,” a lot of people think of some person approaching and cornering them at a cocktail party that they really don't want to talk to and who is trying to sell them something.

In my workshops, I often jokingly start out by saying, “Do we have anyone in the audience who is happily married?” One or two people usually raise their hands. I say, “Tell me about your first date. At the end of that date, did you get married?” They all say no.

Here's something about networking. You don't walk into a room and say, “Hi. Are you going to be useful to me? I want to know now, or I don't want to talk to you anymore.”

Robert: It's like saying, “Hi. Gee, I'd love for you to be my client,” or “Can I call you and sell you tomorrow?”

Diane: Exactly. I have two core aspects to my definition of networking. First, networking is building relationships before you need them. For example, you didn't call me clear out of the blue and say, “Diane, I read your book. You're on the recording right now. Let's talk for the next hour and a half.”

Instead, we met over the summer. We talked about this the other day. We've had some back-and-forth. We were building the relationship before we decided to do this project together.

It's really important to understand that when you need something, be it a client, vendor or job, that's when you tap into your existing networking. You say to the people who already know, like and trust you, "I need something. Would you please help me find the person who can solve this?"

In many cases, they will connect you to someone you don't know. However, the idea of walking in and trying to do this with strangers is unrealistic. It puts too much pressure on you.

Robert: In my Marketing Ball system, I call that "affiliation" and "familiarity." You belong to various networks and build familiarity. Without that familiarity, you really can't do much.

Diane: Familiarity is the second part of my definition. It's the transference of trust. A long time ago, someone said, "You have to get Middleton's information, Diane. It's great for marketing. I launched the business." Based on that, I trusted her that your information would be worthwhile. This summer, when she said, "Let's go to the Middleton workshop," it was the same thing.

[Part of it is realizing that when you are an ambassador for someone, they're really trusting you in the importance

of knowing who your own ambassadors are, who trusts you and who would love to help champion you but doesn't know what they can do for you.

Robert: People might be surprised that although I have a lot of people in my programs and buying my products and my main marketing vehicle is online, the conduit to those people buying online is usually word of mouth and relationships.

Sometimes, people just find me on the web, which is great. Usually, though, people *send* their friends to my website. That's what makes a difference, getting to know these people and building these relationships.

Diane: Have you ever done any TV ads?

Robert: I haven't.

Diane: I've not seen you on Super Bowl yet.

Robert: I plan to someday, or to do a half-hour commercial like Obama.

Diane: Absolutely! Neither of us has done a Super Bowl ad. We build our businesses through word of mouth by people who like us. What's so amazing about networking is that people like you so much they can't wait to tell other people about you.

What's so great about referrals and word of mouth is that people say, "You have to know about this person." They feel like they're in the know. They really want to talk about

you. It's just amazing when people are so excited about you.

The reality is that you have solved a problem for them. When they learn about your marketing system or my networking system, all of a sudden they realize, "This isn't as complicated as I might have made it."

Robert: The other thing you said that's important has to do with developing relationships now that can be of use to you later.

Diane: You need to build relationships before you need them.

Robert: Part of networking is connecting with people who might be clients sooner or later. You never really know who will be a client, but you connect with people, meet with people, get to know them, put them on your list and all those things. They might not be a client, but they might refer someone else who becomes a client. That relationship can get you a lot of indirect business, not necessarily business tomorrow.

Diane: The other thing is staying in touch with people. I teach at one of the MBA programs here in Boston. One assignment for my students was to write a list of everyone who helped them get into the MBA program. Then I asked them, "When was the last time you were in touch with this person?"

If they had not been in touch with the person in the last six months, their assignment was to reach out to that person and let them know they were in this class and that

their assignment was to reconnect with this person and say, “Thank you. This is something I’m working on. I’m in this class. Thank you for helping me get into my MBA program.”

You don’t want to wait until five years have passed and you need a job or you have so much work that you need to hire 10 engineers. Then you call someone and say, “Remember me? I’m the one you helped get into the MBA program, but you haven’t heard from me in 10 years.”

Robert: “I’m the one who didn’t thank you!”

Diane: A lot of it is staying in touch and saying to someone, “What can I do, and how can I help you?” You need to build the relationship before you actually need it. When you do need it, you want it to be there.

There’s a difference between your network and your database. My database is huge, with thousands of people. My network is the people who return my call and return it quickly. I differentiate that. I have a newsletter that goes off to thousands of people, but they’re not people I necessarily expect to hear from. It’s a different relationship.

Robert: When I created a list of all the people I wanted for my Expert Interviews, I came up with a lot of names of people I’ve met, connected with and worked with in some way over the years. All of them, without exception, have been excited to do this series.

It's great to be able to tap into these relationships, as opposed to just finding some marketing guru I don't know or have a connection with.

That's the definition of networking, building those relationships.

Diane: I have a funnel in my first book. The top of the funnel is marketing. As you go down a little bit, there's networking. As it gets a little narrower, it's sales. There is overlap in all three.

Marketing means, "I know who Robert Middleton is. I know who Microsoft is. I know who Volvo is." Networking is, "I know someone who might have a contact where we can find a way to do business." Sales is when you start saying, "Here's the value proposition. I want to help solve this problem. It's going to cost you this much," and you narrow it down.

In some cases, people try to jump from marketing into sales and forget the networking. They overlook the fact that there are so many people who would really like to help them out. People can't read your mind.

Robert: In my Fast Track system, we talk about getting people information and building that familiarity. You're really not in the selling conversation until someone is ready to explore working with you. It is done in stages or steps. You have a slightly different model, Diane, but it's really the same thing.

Let's look at the next one, which is a big piece of it. We have the foundation, and the next one is A, for Action. There are so many networking actions you can take. One of the problems people have with networking is that they see it as a cocktail mixer and nothing more.

What are the most important networking activities? Tell us what is the most important and where you have to focus your time and attention.

Diane:

I'll tell you a little secret. If I had only known how easy it was to network as a speaker, I would have become a speaker a long time ago. I spoke a few weeks ago, and I don't know that I'll have an experience like it ever again. I was actually on a Broadway stage.

A client in New York said they were doing the event at a theater. I thought, "All kinds of companies have theaters, or multipurpose rooms." Little did I know, it was the American Airlines Theatre on 42nd and Broadway. They're playing "A Man for All Seasons" right now, with Frank Langella.

The next thing I knew, I was on a Broadway stage for a 90-minute keynote. There were 400 accountants in the audience. At the end of that time, 400 people felt like they knew me. They heard stories and got information. It was phenomenal because, at the end, they said, "I'm motivated. I feel inspired to do these things. These are accountants!"

The whole point is that 400 people knew me. Right away, I have 400 new people. When I walked into the cocktail

party afterward, it was almost surreal with all the people saying, “There she is. There she is.” I didn’t have to walk up to anyone and say, “Hi. I’d like to meet you and tell you about networking.” They came up to me.

I’ve learned that being a speaker is a terrific way for people who don’t necessarily like the cocktail-party scene to network.

Robert: Speaking is a whole separate subject, yet there’s a lot of overlap.

Diane: I do a drawing at the end of my speaking engagements, if it’s appropriate for the client. In some cases, I also do it at trade shows even though there’s not one specific client. That way I get everyone’s contact information.

I send them an email after the event saying, “Thank you for letting me be your speaker,” and I give them two or three download tools. One is “How to Remember Names.” Another is “How to Work a Room.” I have another goofy one called “99 Ways to Cope With Stress.” I have these downloads in the web page I send them after I’m a speaker.

It’s amazing how many people say, “This is terrific.” You begin to build a relationship from there, but you have no idea who, out of 400 people, this person is.

Robert: Some of those people might join your email list, right?

Diane: Most of them do. It is how I significantly build out my subscriber base. The important thing is that I start giving

them information right away. I could send them a note saying, “If you’re interested in hiring me, here’s how you do that,” but I don’t.

The first thing is to give them something they can actually use, share with their friends and make it that much more successful for them.

Robert:

A big action step, other than speaking, is having free information to, like reports, an assessment, a top-10 list or whatever to give to people.

That also goes for any other kind of networking. If you’re in your BNI group, your networking group, and people ask what you do, you can talk about it. You can also say, “Go to my site and get free information.” People who struggle with networking don’t have enough information.

Diane:

Either they don’t have enough information or they’re just not curious. I happen to be incredibly curious. I love reading newspapers. On occasion, I’ll go to a conference or a talk about something that is out of my element. It’s interesting to go out of my comfort zone and find the people who are drawn to those things.

Speaking of comfort zones, a lot of people really are not comfortable being a speaker. Baby steps include being on a panel or sharing the stage with a couple of other people. A really wonderful baby step is to ask the speaker a question.

One of the reasons this is so incredibly powerful is because it is a nightmare for a speaker, after they finish

speaking and have hopefully had a round of applause, to have no questions. The speaker thinks, “Oh my god. Am I that boring?” I love the person who asks the first question. In many cases, I give them a prize!

Robert: That’s interesting. When I belonged to IMC, the Institute of Management Consultants, I participated very actively in their monthly meetings. I stood up, asked questions and made comments. I had some visibility even though I wasn’t necessarily giving a talk. I got a lot of clients because of that. People came up, wanted to know more about me, got on my list and found out more.

What you’re saying is, “Don’t hide.” One way to not hide is to participate when there’s a presentation.

Diane: What’s also fun is asking a question that’s not necessarily an obvious business question.

A couple of years ago, the CEO of Raytheon was talking about the crisis he feels the United States is going to face in 10, 15 or 20 years when there are few or no engineers in this country. Raytheon is so concerned about this that they’re doing programs in elementary and junior high schools to get kids interested in math and science resulting in a pipeline of kids to hire down the line.

He talked about some of the different things they were doing, like bringing sports figures, such as famous baseball and football players, into the schools and teaching kids math. I thought, “With all due respect, this is for the boys, not the girls.” I was really good in math until I discovered boys, so I thought Raytheon’s approach

was a bummer. I like to think this is a new generation as so... I stood up and I said, “I have a very important question about girls and math.”

During his introduction the CEO had mentioned, in addition to his pedigree of being the CEO and starting out as a junior guy in the mailroom of Raytheon, that in his spare time he makes beer-can chicken.

Beer-can chicken is made by taking a beer can, emptying it of some of the beer by drinking or dumping it and impaling the chicken on top of the beer can. You then put the beer can with the chicken on it onto the grill. The beer bubbles into the chicken and is divine. It’s a very moist way of grilling a chicken.

I thought, “This is what the CEO does in his spare time? How curious is that?” I had just had a beer-can chicken at a birthday party the week before, so it was fresh on my mind. I would like to believe this is a new generation, so I stood up and said, “I have an important question about girls and math. By the way, I’m a huge fan of beer-can chicken.”

As I got ready to ask my question, he said, “Forget the beer.” I froze. He said, “Instead, do some Sauvignon blanc, a little bit of lemon, some dill,” and he started rattling off spices. I was ready to hide under the carpet. I was mortified because there were 350 Boston executives looking at me like, “Who are you?” However, I walked out of that room having met 30 people.

Robert: They came up to you afterward?

Diane: Half came up to me and said, “What’s beer-can chicken?” The other half said, “I want to talk to you about girls and math.” I actually ended up on the local news that night because they did a little feature of me in the lobby afterward about what corporations can do to embrace women and young girls and get them interested in the sciences.

This is so fresh on my mind is because I ran into this man at an event two or three months ago. I had never actually met him before because I had been just one of 350 people in the room. Then two or three months ago, he was in proximity to me, and I thought, “Why am I so chicken to walk up to this man and introduce myself? Get over yourself, Diane. Just go up and say hello.”

I went up to him and said, “I never met you, but a couple of years ago at a conference, I asked you a question about beer-can chicken.” He said, “You’re the one! I am so happy to actually meet you because that question has become legend at Raytheon, but people think I made it up.”

It was a little delicate because he had been accused of some plagiarism on something else, so I think he was happy to actually meet me. We had this incredible connection, and this was the CEO of Raytheon.

When I saw him leaving the room, I thought, “I should talk to him a little bit more about this. Could I go and do math in school? Could I find famous women? What could I do?” I saw him coming out and thought, “You are about to make a big networking mistake. You’re looking for him,

but you should be looking for his assistant. Which one of these people is his assistant?”

I found his assistant and introduced myself to her. She and I then talked. Sadly, my father passed away a few weeks after this, so I didn't really have a chance to follow up with him. In the short term, though, his assistant returned all my calls. I could have focused on the CEO, but a great action thing is to identify the gatekeepers, the people around that speaker.

Asking a question, being on a panel and ultimately being a speaker are all great ways to network. Another way is online. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are terrific ways to network.

Robert: I joined Facebook.

Diane: You have thousands of friends, I'm sure.

Robert: I invited the people from my email list to be on it. Because I've been so busy, I haven't done much with it. I'd love to know some ways that you have used Facebook. Has it resulted in business or increased contacts? How has that worked?

Diane: Let me walk through the personalities of each of the systems. There are so many social networking sites out there, but I have decided to focus on LinkedIn and Facebook, putting my time and energy into building on that.

Robert: They're the most popular.

Diane: There are also Reunion, MySpace and many others, but I've focused on those two. LinkedIn is more for the business part of your life. It is for your professional resume, your vitae or who you've worked for and where you went to school. It's going to focus on your professional life.

For a while, LinkedIn did not have photographs. It struggled a little bit in the beginning because it didn't want to be a Facebook or a dating service. Also, in business, you can have people who are skewed on race or gender.

I have a mathematician friend named Pat. She always puts "Pat" on her resume because they don't know by her name if she's male or female until the interview. Once you see a picture, it's a giveaway.

LinkedIn started adding pictures because people wanted to know, "Who is this person?" It wasn't, "Are you black, white, purple, male or female?" It was simply, "I don't know who you are."

You can go on LinkedIn and say to someone, "Please join my LinkedIn network." When you join LinkedIn, they encourage you to go into your database and invite all of your friends, but I don't recommend you do this. It may be different for people like you and me who have newsletter lists, but I've still kept my LinkedIn pretty small and haven't invited my 20,000 subscribers to link in with me.

My hope is that when I look at my LinkedIn list, I actually can say who every single one of those people is. In the beginning, some people get LinkedIn-liquored and invite a few more people. Then it gets a little bit skewed. In many cases though, you can keep it pretty focused.

What's really great about LinkedIn is that people can post something about you. They've made it so you can't go raving off on somebody. It's not completely sanitized, but the idea is that you say something pretty positive.

Robert: You can make recommendations and endorsements. You can always ask people, "Hey, can you go to my site and give me a recommendation?"

Diane: Absolutely. That's something I have not been good at and that I'm probably going to do over the months of December and January when I'm not traveling as much.

You can close your LinkedIn network, which I have done. When someone joins my network, they can see who's within my network. Outsiders have to join first before they can see. I do this so people don't go shopping in my network.

Somebody might say, "Diane, I see you. You know Robert Middleton. Can you introduce me?" If they're not in my network and they're not someone I would endorse, I want to do some due diligence before making the introduction.

The main way I use LinkedIn is as a research tool. I recently found out about a keynote speaking opportunity for a conference in New Orleans in the spring. I went to

LinkedIn and put in the company name to see if there was someone there who I knew.

I can apply through a proposal, an RFP, but it would make a whole lot more sense if I said, “Robert, I see you know so-and-so. Would you be willing to recommend me if I put in a proposal?”

Robert: How did you do a search in LinkedIn to find that?

Diane: I went to their Search tool and put in the company name.

On occasion, meeting planners are interested in hiring me as a speaker. I will go into LinkedIn and put the words “meeting planners” in quotes. Then all the meeting planners come up.

It’s a very powerful research tool. I don’t think people always appreciate how incredibly amazing LinkedIn is for this.

Robert: It could be a prospecting tool as well, right?

Diane: It’s very much a prospecting tool.

Robert: If I have an idea that XYZ Company in my area is a potential client, I can go into LinkedIn, do research on that company and then see if any of my immediate network knows people in that network. Then what would I do?

Diane: At that point, I typically pick up the phone. I don’t do a blast email. I pick up the phone and say, “Robert, I see

you know so-and-so.” It gives me an excuse to reconnect with you, further building a relationship before I need it. Then I can say, “I saw on LinkedIn that you know Diane Darling. Is there any chance you can fill me in on what she’s like or what the needs of her company are?”

Plenty of people think we, at Effective Networking, are a technology company. I get calls asking me how many printers and systems we have. I say, “We have two, a color and a black-and-white.” They say, “You have to be kidding!”

People can really use LinkedIn as a powerful research tool. Facebook is more social. It’s where you’re going to post pictures and talk about your kids, friends and hangouts. You have to be really smart in that what goes online stays online... forever. It gets archived. You can take pictures down, but they are archived.

When I teach the undergraduates, and even the MBAs and graduate students, I say to them, “Please remember, with regard to your dating efforts, drinking habits and your social life, if you go on here and talk about it, it is archived. It’s visible, even if there’s a password.” They broke into Sarah Palin’s email account during the campaign. It’s pretty easy to do.

I tried to explain this to some students the other day. I said, “Whatever you think is on Google now used to be gossip.” You just had to ask a few people, but you could find out the scoop. Now, you just go online. You get the scoop, but so does *everyone* else. Just be aware.

Robert: I have a Facebook profile and a number of friends, most of whom are subscribers or people who were recommended to check me out. I get a lot of, “I have a group. Would you like to join?” If you have some kind of group or want to create a mini community within Facebook, you can do that.

Diane: I have different communities that I am a part of, such as a Boston community and a speakers’ community. Creating a group is different from adding an application. When you add applications, you get a little bit dicier as far as technology and what you’re opening yourself up for.

Robert: I reject 100% of those. “I want to give you a baloney sandwich.” No, thank you. It’s kind of silly.

If you’re holding an event or teleclass, you can announce to the members in your group that you’re doing that. I get half a dozen or more of those a week and have taken advantage of a few. You can promote directly to your actual friends. It won’t go to 10 billion other people. It can be a good way to promote within your friend network.

Diane: Facebook marketing or networking is a terrific way to do some very cost-effective outreach to that audience and get some visibility. This is the power of technology and word of mouth. You can send a note out and say, “Please forward to your friends.” With the click of one button, you can send to thousands of people. It wouldn’t be possible to do that in the old days with postage or horse and buggy.

Robert: I want to put in a little pitch. Within my Action Plan Marketing Club, there is a discussion forum in which you

can ask and answer questions or join a discussion about anything to do with marketing or selling for independent professionals.

Discussion groups of all kinds, including within certain Facebook groups, can be tremendous marketing tools. You can get to know, like and trust people even though you've never met them in person.

Sometimes, people go into these groups and lurk around, but never post a question or answer and never participate in any way whatsoever. That is really a shame because it's very inexpensive and doesn't take a lot of time.

If you go into our Club discussion group, or any other and post something every week or so, you could get better known. In your signature, there can be a link to your website or email. You don't have to do overt promotion.

Sometimes, people join the group and, as their very first posting, say, "Hey, I have this. Go to my website." That's not what we're talking about. Join the conversation and get known. Then, if you have a particular area of expertise, people will often want to know more. That might lead to who knows what? You can't get the results if you don't play and are not interacting.

Diane:

It's true. I'm a member of a number of Yahoo groups. There's one on entrepreneurship for the Harvard community. Even though I didn't go to Harvard, I spoke one time for them and got on that list. It's phenomenal.

There are 3,000 people who post everything from, “I’m searching for an attorney on patents,” to “I have to let somebody go,” to “Anybody know about H-1B visas?” to “What are some tactics you’re taking in this market to promote your businesses?”

It’s really fascinating. I’ll be at a random cocktail party or someone’s house for dinner and a person will say, “I’m racking my brain to figure out how I know you. I know we’ve met before, but I can’t figure it out.” Nine times out of 10, it’s this list.

I jokingly say, “A hobby I have, more so in the winter than the rest of the year, is knitting.” I’m on a listserv of people who knit and have questions about projects, which is called “stitch ‘n bitch.” You can post a question. People meet at Starbucks and have little knitting circles. They’re all around the world.

Robert: Knitting, Starbucks and networking are all combined! Are you familiar with www.Meetup.com?

Diane: I love www.Meetup.com.

Robert: Let’s talk about that a little bit. It’s a great online thing that takes people offline to meet with each other.

Diane: That’s one of the things that is so powerful about technology right now. This whole social-networking phenomenon has tapped into the fact that people don’t just want to connect online, but they actually want to meet each other. It doesn’t have to be a dating thing. They have likeminded interests.

With Meetup.com, you can say, “I want something within five or 10 miles of my zip code.”

Robert: You can put in various keywords, like “entrepreneur” or “small business.”

Diane: You can be really specific, like “entrepreneur walking group.” I joined one after my mom passed away called “motherless daughters.” It can be very serious or funny. There’s one for salsa dancers. There are political groups. I noticed one the other day for” Australians living in Boston.”

I joined one for ex-Midwesterners because I spent a fair amount of my life living in Indiana. I bellyache about how I miss the Midwest’s friendliness. I like the intellectual charge of life in Boston, but I miss the friendliness and saying hi to people on the street, so I joined this group.

The other night, the woman who runs this group sent a note out saying she was looking for a Hoosier to talk to about the election. I don’t ever say who I vote for, but I said I was happy to talk to her about this. We live less than two miles away from each other, but we’ve never met. We’re a few years apart in age. Now we’re like best buddies already, and we’re going to have coffee this weekend.

Robert: That’s great. It all came out of a Meetup group. The way it used to be, for a long time, was that you could network at Chambers of Commerce and professional groups, which are still around and viable like the National Speakers

Association, American Society for Training and Development, or human resource managers or consultants groups. Those are still groups that are good to try out.

Service clubs like Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions are good for some people. There are also the Morning Networking Groups, the biggest one being BNI, [Business Networking International](#). All of those are still around and viable, but they all have limitations.

With Meetup, you can create any cross section of demographic and psychographic you want, and there will be people who have an interest in it. It doesn't have to be a formal organization that's been around for 50 years. You put it up, some people respond and you get together. Because you have something in common, it can lead somewhere.

The woman you mentioned is now a good connection and a good friend. Things start to happen from that.

Diane: I go to an entrepreneur one in Boston that has 40 or 50 people. We meet twice a month. There's a woman I know who is doing a similar one in Toronto. I think she has 800 people on her list and gets around 100 people for her events.

Robert: Does she charge for these events?

Diane: It's minimal, something like \$20.

Robert: It covers the costs.

This is a thing that makes it easy for anyone to jump into networking because you can start your own group or join a group. How do you start something like this?

Diane: Before starting a group, I recommend that you see if there is already a group like that. You don't want to become a competitor right off the bat unless you have a built-in list.

Meetup is terrific for people who move. Whenever people plan to move and ask how to network, I tell them to join Meetup groups right now.

There was a pregnant woman in my MBA class who's moving to Spokane. I told her to look for moms groups in Spokane now, before even moving. She should say, "I'm going to be out there in three months. I'm going to be a new mom. My husband is teaching at XYZ University. I'm looking to meet people."

Speaking of moms, I don't have children. You miss out on so many networking opportunities when you don't have kids. I don't have a kid or a dog, and I'm single, so I'm 0 for 3.

Robert: You're not a soccer mom. You don't have PTA and all of those things. All of these are opportunities to get out and network and meet.

Diane: There's an online group called "twitter moms." It's apparently a very powerful group of moms who post things like "My kid just did this." Because it's global,

there's always somebody who's on it. There are amazing groups like that.

I've mentioned Twitter. It's more of an online microblogging site. It's a little spooky when you sign up for it because people start "following" you. That terminology, especially with my name "Darling," freaked me out in the beginning! So far, so good, though.

It seemed a little bit vain at first, but it has been fun. The other night, there was an event where people were getting awards in the technology space. I was going to go to the event, and I happened to see on Twitter that one of the people getting an award was in my Twitter group.

I tweeted him and said, "I'll try to say hello tonight. Congratulations on your award." He's a pretty prestigious person with about 15,000 followers in his Twitter group, but he tweeted me right back and said, "Thanks so much. I don't like events. It'll be fun if we can say hello."

At the event, I walked up to him and said, "Hey, we were tweeting today. It's nice to talk to you." We had a really nice hello, but we had done the networking before. I didn't walk up to him and say, "You've never met me before, but I think you're interesting." Then you come across as a stalker. Instead, he could have looked at my website. It was very easy for him to feel a connection.

Robert:

Let's wrap up this part about action. Obviously, we could talk about it all day. We talked about some different actions other than all the stuff you do at cocktail

networking. The whole thing I got from this is that there are so many places to connect if you really leverage it.

A speaking engagement is really an opportunity for networking. Standing up and participating in a class or a talk is a way to connect in networking. All the online things are a way to connect.

If you're not connecting, it's not because there aren't opportunities. There are abundant opportunities, but you have to stick your neck out a little bit, put out some information and be willing to interact. All of a sudden, you'll be connected at a level that's unheard of before, especially with all the online ways to do it.

Diane:

When you blend the online and offline, it's incredibly powerful. I also encourage people to network with reporters. At the end of almost every article is the reporter's email. Send them a note and say, "I really liked your article about XYZ. Maybe you'd be interested in knowing ABC. Here's another perspective on your story." Ideally, don't brag about yourself.

I'm in the process of navigating some database stuff, and I saw a posting about one of the databases today. I sent an email to the reporter. The next thing I know, he's asking if he can give my feedback to the CEO of this huge company (who hasn't been returning my phone calls). I said sure.

Reporters like to be in the know. I've been in *The Wall Street Journal* five or six times, including just the other day. *The Wall Street Journal* is actually how I got my book deal. I was in the *Wall St. Journal* and I got a call

from McGraw-Hill saying, “We read about you today in the paper. Would you like to write a book?”

Robert: This is the kind of call we like to get. It came from reaching out and communicating with people. All of a sudden, things like that happen.

Diane: I was also on “NBC Nightly News.” The same day, I got a call from Anne Thompson who’s a correspondent. They read about me in the paper and called me. I thought, “Are you sure you have the right Diane Darling?”

To go back to your first question, there are many ways to network. Events are a part of life, so I’m going to quickly talk about how to make them best work for you.

The first thing you need to do is something I call “the whether report,” which is to determine whether or not you even go. You want to come up with your criteria for why you are going.

Are you going because there’s nothing else on your calendar? Are you going because there are prospects there? Are your colleagues there? Are your competitors there? Do you have a job? When I’m the speaker, I’m going because I have a job. I like to be an employed networker at every event I go to.

Tonight, I’m going to an event, but I don’t have a job. I will think of any reason not to go to this event because I don’t like walking into events without having something to do. I like having a role. I’ll probably go tonight, but I

will not say, “Gee, I can’t wait to go to this event.” It’s more of a chore.

One reason I’ll go is that I know three or four of the people who will be there, and I like them very much. I don’t see them very often. This is a good way to have a drive-by networking moment with them. “How are you? It’s nice to see you. What’s new?” Another reason I’ll go is the price is right. It’s free.

Robert: We often forget that if you don’t make those connections, people aren’t thinking about us. If they are meeting you, connecting with you and hearing from you online and off, then all of a sudden you get the call for the book deal, or someone says, “I know you did this. I was thinking of you because I saw you the other day.” It’s putting yourself in harm’s way, so to speak.

Diane: It’s so important.

Is there parking? That’s more of a New England or Boston concern. New Yorkers don’t care about that. Is it easy to get to? Do I have another demand? Should I be home networking with my kids? Should I be home networking with the remote control? Am I tired? Will I just be a cranky person? Would this be really good for me?

In some cases, as I mentioned before, I’ll go to things just out of curiosity. I do it to test my networking skills and say, “Am I up to speed here?” Marathon runners don’t say, “I ran a marathon last year. I’ll do it tonight.” You need to keep in shape, so on occasion, I like to go to something a little out of the box.

I typically try to be one of the first people in the room. When you come into a room and I'm already there, you're coming into my space. It makes me less anxious about saying hi to you or having to walk into the room and figure out what little clique to break into. This may go back to junior high school girls who were mean to me, but it really goes back to people's comfort level.

I often try to have a networking buddy. "I'm going to go to this event. Would you like to join me? Meet me there." We did a survey a while back. The number one reason people don't like to go to events is that they don't want to arrive alone, be alone and have that uncertainty.

A huge networking opportunity that people miss out on is inviting someone. "I heard about this event. Would you like to meet me there, and we'll see if it's good or bad?"

Robert: Then you can introduce that person to people. They might know someone there to introduce you to. It's a little more fun.

Diane: Another thing I do going into networking events is have a nibble on my way there. It's really tough when you're trying to eat appetizers, have something to drink, exchange business cards and shake hands all at the same time. Too often, something spills! It is net-working, not net-eating. When I speak to college students who are looking for free food, they don't like this at all.

You want to be focused. I put my business cards in my right pocket. When I give you my business card from my

right pocket, I put the one you give me into my left pocket so I don't confuse things. I don't want to walk around the corner, meet someone else and give them your card by mistake.

I also have a notebook and pen with me. If someone says, "Diane, here's someone I think you should meet," I can pull out a notebook and write down that information immediately.

This is a girl thing. Just buy clothes with pockets. It's not an issue for you men. Women often want suits that make us look thin that have no pockets. Guess what? It just doesn't work.

Robert: It's useless for networking.

Diane: This is a networking outfit. It's not the Oscars.

Your name badge goes on your upper right shoulder. Many people slap their badge across the left. When you and I shake hands, the eye naturally goes up the right arm. Men, particularly, say to me, "Diane, will you tell ladies to put it on the upper right shoulder? If it's lower, I'm going to look!" This is a business event, not a social event. You don't want to confuse the two.

I do some research ahead of time. Are there speakers? Are there VIPs? I try to talk to them before they speak because at that point nobody knows who they are.

You and I both know that when you're a speaker, you're often an outsider. If I'm with accountants, I have an

important role as the keynote, yet because I'm not an accountant, I'm still an outsider. I love it when people walk up to me ahead of time and say welcome.

I also encourage people to do something that might be considered a little bit funny. People who have kids will get this right away. For many years, my mother had no name. She was "Diane's mother." It didn't matter that she was Ann Darling, only that she was Diane's mother.

In the social sector, we introduce ourselves by what we have in common and then say our name later. In business, we say our name first. The problem with that is that people can't remember your name. I encourage people to do what I call a "dyslexic introduction." I'm actually dyslexic, so I say that with all thoughtfulness.

I say, "Hi. I'm your speaker. My name is Diane Darling," or "Hi. I'm a member of this organization. My name is Diane Darling," or "Hi. I'm new to this organization. My name is Diane Darling." Then I say something about myself which can engage conversation.

The tricky thing about events is to not only get into conversations, but also to get out of them. One of my tricks to get out of a conversation is to say, "Do you two know each other?" I introduce people and bring them into my group. Then I can slip away, and they don't even miss me.

Another trick is to say, "I'm really thirsty, Robert. Would you like to join me at the bar?" When we walk up to the bar, I again say, "Do you two know each other?" People

think I know everybody, but I don't. I'm just being friendly. I'll say, "Do you two know each other? I was just talking to Robert about marketing. He's a really interesting person, someone you might want to know." And the next thing you know, you're engaged in conversation.

When I walk out of the event, I take all the business cards and, very high tech, put them into a Ziploc bag. I have a couple of different Ziploc processes that I use. I have a Ziploc for all of November and put the cards of the people I meet that month in there. I put all of that information into my online database.

Robert: Do you use a CardScan?

Diane: I use a CardScan when I speak because I get a lot of cards. After an event when you get home and look at the card and have no idea who the person is, it's a waste of time.

I don't do very much one-on-one coaching, but on occasion when someone twists my arm and pays me a lot of money, I will. They'll come in with 20 cards, so proud of themselves. I'll say, "Great. Tell me about Robert Middleton."

If they have no idea who that is, I rip the card in half. When they say, "But that's a networking opportunity," I say, "You don't know who they are, so it's not a networking opportunity. If you want to put them in your mailing list and mail to them, that's fine, but don't call it a networking opportunity."

I split the cards into A, B and C. A is action. I like to give people information, such as “Here’s Robert Middleton’s website with great information.” B is “I enjoyed our conversation. Let’s continue it, let’s have a cup of coffee and see how we might get to know each other.” C contains the people for whom there is no action even though I enjoyed them. It’s okay to have that audience of people.

The next part is the one-on-one networking, which is the really important action where you sit down and figure out how you can do business with each other. You have to think about the difference between your database and your network and how you know people.

That was an overview of events and how I manage them. One, know why you’re going, two the best practices for being there. And three, give yourself some time to follow up and really cherish the effort you’ve put into that.

Robert:

There are so many things to cover here. I recommend everyone get Diane’s book. It’s listed in the Resources section of the Club under Books with a link to Amazon.

Let’s continue with the Darling Formula. The next one is R, Reciprocity.

Diane:

Part of what is so important about reciprocity is to know how I can help you. The other day you mentioned that you’re going to be in Minneapolis speaking. I thought, “Who in my network would like to meet Robert?” If I don’t know what you do or how I can help you, it’s really hard for me to do that.

Reciprocity is not keeping score. There are some people who have been very helpful to me. There's a woman here in Boston who has given me many referrals, even though she's never been a customer herself. What can I do for her? Occasionally, I'll do things, but in many cases the reciprocity is simply saying, "Thank you." I take her out for dinner every so often. She's a person I enjoy.

Know what you can do for other people, and be sure people know what they can do for you. A curious thing you might want to do is go onto www.SurveyMonkey.com and create a fun, quick online-survey tool. Send it out to some folks and say, "What do I do for a living? Do you know how to give me a referral?" If people don't know those things, it's really a missed opportunity.

Be thoughtful about doing this between personal relationships and business relationships. You're not necessarily going to survey everyone in your neighborhood association or place of worship. You want to find people you do know in your business sector.

BNI is a terrific forum for things like this. They make you rehearse this and get very clear about some of these organizations and how you ask for help. In many cases, the way you can help people may or may not be business.

I do an exercise in some of my workshops. I've nicknamed it "Contact Mining." I say, "Let's think about who in your contact list we can mine. Does anybody here have a problem?" In the beginning, it was about work. It very quickly migrated to "I need this fixed in my house. Does

anyone know a good contractor?” It was like Joe the Plumber.

People were looking for plumbers and electricians. They were also trying to get their kids a job. They had their work under control. In many cases, the people who could help each other out were not necessarily work-related. Reciprocity is really important.

Robert: The main idea behind this is that you need to let people know.

Diane: You need to let people know what you do and who would be a good person for you to meet. Whenever I present to a bank, I jokingly say, “How many of you have a grandmother who thinks you’re a bank teller?” Half the room raises their hands.

There are a couple of people I know who work in the technology department. They could work at any company, but it just happens to be a bank. Because they work at something with the word “bank” in the company name, people think “bank teller.”

Robert: I have a thing called the “million-dollar bet.” If someone asks 20 of your friends, “What does Diane do?” and all 20 say the same thing, you win \$1 million. After the second or third person, it’s usually all over.

A lot of this is simply education, education, education, information, information, information. This is one reason I send an ezine to everyone every week. I give people

information, but then they find out what I do, visit my website and read my stuff.

You can't overeducate people about what you do. Everyone is focused on a million other things, so it takes a long time for people to really get the message of what you do and how you can help people.

Diane: There may be some things that would be applicable for someone at a Fortune 100 to learn from your marketing, but that's probably not your sweet spot. Would it be nice if you met them? Okay, but it may not be the best use of your time and energy.

If I say, "Robert, I have this great referral at this huge company. You're going to be so excited," you're going to think, "You know what? I didn't educate Diane."

Robert: I've had people do that. I think, "That's not what I do at all." They say, "Come and do in-house workshops on marketing for a high-tech company." That's not me.

Let's move on to the next one.

Diane: The next one is L, Long term. It's so important. As I said in the beginning, you're not going to get married at the end of this cocktail party. If someone says, "Let's get married" or "Come on board. Here's the employment contract," and expects you to sign it right then and there, you're going to run.

People will say, "I went to that networking event and didn't get anything out of it."

Robert: “I went to networking once. It didn’t work. What a scam. I’ll never network again!”

Diane: There are unrealistic expectations. I met Dr. Ruth about a year ago and interviewed her in the spring. I had the chance to sit down with her for a cup of coffee in New York. I said, “What’s the number one relationship mistake people make?” She said, “Missed expectations.”

They have in their mind what they think they’re going to get out of a relationship, and it is absolutely unreal. No one is at fault. It’s just that no one could possibly have met that expectation.

I’ve learned this the hard way, but I trust very quickly. Sometimes, sadly, not everyone deserves your trust. Get to know people and do due diligence. Ask them good questions and find out a little bit about them before you go off and be their huge champion. People email me saying, “Can you please share this information with your list?” I think, “I don’t know you.”

Robert: I get that all the time as well because I have a big list and send stuff to people. People say, “I have a great product. I’d like to share it with all your subscribers. If you could just put a notice in your list, it would be wonderful.”

It’s not very often that you’re going to jump on that. It’s too much, too soon, when there’s not enough familiarity and relationship yet.

Diane: You might, down the line, but you'll know it down the line.

Robert: If someone called me and said, "Robert, I've been on your ezine list for a couple of years. I love what you do, and I've even bought a few of your products. I do something where I think there might be a connection. I just want to chat with you a little bit to see if there is some sort of connection," I would take that call and talk to them.

He showed some interest in me and he's been a customer or subscriber or mine, so there's somewhere to go. It's when people want to get something from you immediately without giving anything in return that you have the problem. It's not really a foundation for a long-term relationship.

Diane: You end up wasting so much time. There's a wonderful sign in a print shop around the corner, which says, "You can have it fast, right or cheap. Pick two." You want to be mindful of the speed.

Robert: The next step is I, Introverts.

Diane: This is one of my favorites. If you talk to people who knew me in high school or college, they would say I was an extrovert and have become much more introverted in my older years. I have a great appreciation for introverts and shy people. They can be amazing networkers.

I've mentioned the friendly part of me. I'm very friendly. I like people very much, but I don't say, "I can't wait to walk

into this cocktail party, talk to a whole bunch of strange people I've never met and put myself out there."

I'd much prefer someone to say, "I'm going to call you tomorrow, Diane. We're going to schedule a coffee, and you'll talk to Robert. Here's why you're going to talk to him." Then I know you do want to talk to me. It takes away so much of the uncertainty.

If you are an introvert, or if there are introverts in your life, don't try to change them. Let them be an introvert. There are amazing introverts, such as Johnny Carson, David Letterman and Ellen DeGeneres. In many cases, people who are attracted to the stage are introverts because they get to have a role. They know their lines, and the uncertainty isn't there.

Bill Clinton is an extrovert. He loves uncertainty, probably in more ways than one. It doesn't rattle him at all.

Robert: I'm interested to know what percentage of the population are introverts. I hear that there are more extroverts than introverts. In my client base, I tend to find more introverts because those are the ones who seem to struggle with marketing.

Diane: They struggle with marketing because the last thing in the world they want to do is "sell." When introverts say, "I don't want to go network," I say, "Okay. Tell me what you do." They'll say attorney, accountant, architect and so on. I ask "What do you love about being an architect?" "I like building beautiful homes or offices. I like having beautiful space."

Even doctors will say, “I hate going to medical conferences.” Scientists, engineers, people who make the most amazing technology and Bill Gates, for heaven’s sake, are all introverts.

My comment to them is, “You mean that you have an understanding of how you can make my office look better, or how you could make someone’s health better, but you don’t want to tell me about it?” They say, “Wow. I never thought about it that way!”

A couple of years ago, there was an MBA student at the University of Michigan who boldly raised her hand and said, “I just don’t like this stuff. I’m good at what I do, and I just want to go do my work.”

Robert: “I want to go hide and do the work in my ivory tower!”

Diane: I said, “Who knows Jane? What can you tell me about Jane?” People in the classroom said all these great things about Jane. I said, “You mean to tell me that you could make operations at a major corporation and save a ton of money, you’re easy to get along with, you know what you’re talking about, you have a good work ethic, and you don’t want to tell a company about that?”

She was so sweet. She came up to me at the end of the class and said, “I can’t wait to tell my mom about you!”

Introverts need to walk into a room and think, “What problem can I solve for people in this room? What can I give to them? Who can I introduce them to? What headache do they have that I might be able to help go

away?” This is what I do whenever I’m feeling anxious, and I’ll probably be doing it tonight.

Robert: I like to use “What’s the contribution I can make?”

Diane: That’s perfect. The most important thing for introverts and the people who manage them, live with them, love them and work with them to is to understand is that they need to be who they are.

A different thing I want to talk about is shyness. A number of years ago, I was on a plane reading a book, and I thought, “Someone is looking at me.” I looked up and there were little eyes looking at me. This boy said, “I’m four. How old are you?” It was magic. He didn’t know yet to not ask how old are you. At four, he had no fear. We learn fear.

This is where we can go into our therapist and say, “You’re fired because I have now figured this out. I can blame my parents because when I left the house, they said, ‘Don’t talk to strangers.’”

Robert: That’s a great injunction if you want to be a marketer of your services!

Diane: It’s hysterical. I have in my mind that I should be afraid of these people tonight. I have no reason to be. I’ve never been mugged at this event. I’ve never had anybody say, “Diane, why would you come up and say hi to me? I don’t want to talk to you.” It’s never happened, but if it does happen, it’s really *their* problem.

We learn to be afraid. I love 4-year-olds. People tell me that it's around the 4 or 5-year mark when kids start getting made fun of. They begin to shy away.

I saw this happen a number of years ago. I got an email that said, "Are you the Diane Darling I knew in fifth grade?" It was my fifth-grade crush.

He came up to Boston, and we went to the Red Sox together. As we walked down the street, he said hi to everyone! That's not what you do on the streets of Boston. It was like walking down the street with Crocodile Dundee. It was so funny.

Robert: He was from Indiana, right?

Diane: Yes. We're from a town of 8,000 people, most of whom you know. Even if you don't, you at least say hi. It doesn't mean you want anything. You're just saying hi.

I started laughing because people were crossing the street in front of us because they heard this guy was coming down the street saying hi to everybody. They wanted to get out of his way. I tried to explain that this wasn't our culture.

Robert: You're supposed to be paranoid in Boston!

Diane: You don't even look at people in Boston. I love Boston, but I actually think New Yorkers are friendlier. It was interesting for me that, on the way back, he had stopped saying hi. He learned right away to shy away from saying hi. This was a 40-year-old guy.

If you see people who are shy to go into events, they've learned to have fear. The best thing to do is to help them understand. Be a speaker or on a panel.

I love giving away the name badges at events because I'm behind a table, and I get to find out names. It makes it so much easier, except when a person comes up and says, "Hey, Diane. How are you?" They look at you as if you're supposed to know their name and be able to find their nametag, except you can't remember. I say, "I can't read these upside down. Can you help me out?"

Robert:

What you're saying is that you don't need a personality transplant. You can learn how to adapt to this, to still network and still be yourself. Sometimes you have to give yourself a talking to.

I do a lot of things with looking at your beliefs and working through them. You have to consider, "What's the worst that could happen if I went and networked?" Really, there's not much bad that can happen.

Diane:

No, there isn't. If you have a bad experience, don't go back. Don't reengage. Not every group is for you, and not every person is for you.

This is also something where men are better than women. Men have a wonderful firewall. They'll play golf with somebody they think is an absolute jerk in business. They separate the two. On the other hand, if you say something bad to a woman, it means you don't like everything about her. People can be sensitive.

Introverts should love and appreciate who they are and not really stress about it. It's great to have a networking buddy. There are some different systems that are terrific. I like to get there early, so you walk into *my* space. That physically makes it much easier for me.

Robert: By the way, I can relate to this because I am an introvert as well. I have this house and office in a redwood forest by a river half an hour from anywhere. I'd rather stay here than network. I find ways to network online, but I don't meet people enough. However, I've learned a lot of these skills you're talking about, and I know you can get past that and be very effective.

Diane: Some of this is like learning to drive a stick shift. It's sort of painful in the beginning. I don't know about anyone else, but when I first learned to drive a stick shift, I woke up a night or two later with a massive ache on the back of my left leg. There's a muscle in your body that is only used for a clutch. It was untuned and out of shape.

We all have these skills. Talk to people in grocery stores or the post office. Talk to the waitresses. These are ways to talk to strangers and build up your skills.

I like to talk to people in airports. If you ask someone about their luggage in the security line, they'll tell you all the things they love about their luggage. Then you go through security and you're home free. You'll never see them again!

Robert: That's great. We have a couple more, the N and G of DARLING.

Diane: N is for Niceness. Remember good etiquette and manners. Email thank-yous are fine in most cases. On occasion, I'll do a handwritten note. What's terrific about a handwritten note is that they're so unusual you'll only have to do it once or twice in a relationship.

I often do it in the beginning when I meet people. I have note cards with stamps in my car, ready to go. I'll just put out a simple card that says, "I really enjoyed our conversation. Thank you for your time and ideas. I look forward to crossing paths again in the future."

Return phone calls. I return calls even if I'm going to reject people. I've started something new called the "P3," which is our Polite Prospect Policy. It's sad that you have to honor politeness, but I think it's really important to let people know I value that.

When I have a prospect who is polite enough to say to me, "Diane, we're not going to use your services," I actually send them a P3 document that says, "On your next engagement, if you'd like to book with us, we'll give you a discount because you were polite."

On occasion, life gets very overwhelming. In many cases, I do mea culpa, "I'm sorry I haven't been in touch with you. Here's the situation." I do try to have those niceness things.

Some of the niceness stuff is to put down your phone or Blackberry. Put them on vibrate. When I was speaking to 400 people in New York at this amazing theater, there was one person on their Blackberry for most of my speech. The glow in his face gave it away. It wasn't the end of the world, but I remember it.

What are some nice things you can do? Whenever I get an email that is a little bit anxious, or that makes me think, "Maybe this person wishes they hadn't sent this," I call them. I often answer emails with a phone call, especially if anything can get misinterpreted.

I have guidelines about email. Would you send this out if your friends and family were going to read it? Would you send this out if people would see it in the newspaper or on TV?

Robert: You don't want to send angry emails of any sort. It seems like a good idea at the time, but that's the one to hold onto until the next day!

Diane: Think about it. Would you say this to the person's face? If you can say yes to those three things, "I want to read about it in the press," "I'm okay if my friends and family see it," and "I would say this to their face," then you're okay to hit Send. Think about the niceness sorts of things.

One downside to all this social networking and the buzz about networking is that you feel like you have to have everybody be a pal. You don't. There are a lot of wonderful people in the world, but you don't need to be buddies with all of them.

Robert: It's impossible.

Diane: It's okay to slow it down and really take care of the people you do have in your life. The greatest compliment I get is when someone says, "You know, Diane, you walk your talk."

There was a great interview on NPR the other day about Emily Post and a new book about her. One person told a story about being at a dinner party and saying, "Are you Emily Post, the etiquette person?" She got annoyed and said, "What's your point?" He said, "You're eating my roll!" It turned out that she was all but blind at that point and didn't know she was eating the man's roll.

We all make mistakes – even Emily Post. At least have a system that lets you try to do the thank-yous and those courtesies. Most importantly, take care of the people who have taken care of you.

Robert: Very good. The last one, for G, is a word no one has heard of. You had to find a G-word that fit here, so here it is. How do you pronounce it?

Diane: I believe it's pronounced "gwan chee," but I may not be correct.

Robert: The word is "guanxi." What is guanxi?

Diane: Guanxi is the Chinese word for diversity. I also use "G for Gender," but I think it's really important that we have a diversified network. You want to include people who are

older and younger than you, look different than you and have different careers in different industries.

You will learn about them and understand so much more about how the world ticks and all the different ways you can be a resource for people.

If you sit down with your financial manager, they'll tell you that a single-stock portfolio is not a good thing. You want a diversified portfolio. You'll be wealthier, literally, if you have that.

The same is true with your network. If you only hang out with people who think like you or look like you, you can get into group-think pretty easily.

Here in Boston, our neighboring city is Cambridge. It's nicknamed "The People's Republic of Cambridge." There are a lot of people who think very much the same there. There are some good things about that, but there could be a downside as well. You want to have a freshness and new experience.

The other day, I heard someone use the two terms "digital immigrant" and "digital native." You and I are digital immigrants. We came into technology later in life. The people of the next generation coming up the pipeline are digital natives. They've been using technology since they were born.

Robert: There have been computers around.

Diane: It's so hard for me to explain to people that at one point in my life I was actually using an electric typewriter, and I thought electric was cool. There were no answering machines or cell phones.

A man at a conference told me he had watched his son leave the room and turn off the light switch with his thumb. We're the index-finger generation because we dialed phones. He's the thumb generation because they use thumbs for all of their toys, like Blackberries, Nintendos and Wiis.

Robert: How does all of this relate to diversity?

Diane: You understand how someone else thinks. Until three months ago, this never even came up, but I now ask people if they get text messages on their phone.

When I come to the event and am speaking at your conference, in many cases I am coming in the middle of the day or when there might be a speaker. I don't want to call and say, "I'm here." I now send a text message. I want to take care of them, but how I take care of them is very different from three months ago.

I don't even ask people under 30 if they get text messages. They just do.

Robert: I'm feeling out of it. I've never sent or received a text message. I avoid my cell phone like the plague. Of course, I'm never out of my office.

Diane: For you it's a different thing. Why would you get into text messaging if you didn't need to any more than I'm going to ask the Pony Express to set up the time we're going to be on a phone call?

It's necessary to understand the right technology for the right system. When you understand this, conflicts between these generations, how they get along at the office and how people can communicate, it's very helpful.

This is why blended networking is necessary. I'm sure you're finding this in marketing. You want to have an online presence as well as a brochure. You want to have multiple ways of reaching out to different people because different audiences receive information in different ways. If you say, "We're only going to network online," that can be miserable.

Curiously enough, the first translation of my book was Korean. I called McGraw-Hill and said, "Of all the languages in the world, can you explain why Korean was chosen?" They said, "Korea has the highest population per capita, in the whole world, connected to the Internet." They also have very high-speed Internet. Our network is molasses compared to what they have.

They have a young population with minimal social skills. They don't know how to do face-to-face. They don't know how to blend the two. For that reason, someone in Korea felt my book would do extremely well over there.

You learn so much. I got a call from a group asking me to speak. They told me the name of their group, and we

talked for a bit. Toward the end of the conversation, I said, “I have to ask you an awkward question. Your group is called ‘Professionals of Color.’ I am white.” She said, “That’s okay.”

I wanted to be sure that I would be a fit for them, but at the same time, it was really interesting that they understood the networking challenges a non-white group has in certain situations. The conversation was fascinating.

One of the takeaways was that, in some cases, white people are intimidated to network to blacks they know because our fear is that they will think, “The only reason you’re connecting the two of us is because we’re the only two black people you know.”

It was an interesting, albeit delicate, conversation. In some cases, people come to conclusions that sabotage networking. You just need a conversation about it.

Robert: If you’re going to be a good networker, you have to be aware of diversity and the different ways people interact and network depending on their age category, culture and all those things.

Diane: You do. Men and women have classic differences. Men immediately ask for what they want. Women hint. We think you’re supposed to read our minds.

Robert: That might be the most valuable tip in the whole talk!

Diane: It is so amazing. Men will say, “Hey, Robert, I’m looking for some new clients. Do you know any dentists?” If you say no, it doesn’t mean you don’t like Joe. It just means you don’t know any dentists. The woman will say, “I’m not sure. Let me think.” We overthink it. Of course, this is not true for all women.

However, there are some funny patterns. I have a very funny slide of a stereo receiver. The top part is men, and the bottom part is women. The top part of the stereo receiver has one button, off or on. The bottom part has about 20 buttons.

It’s really important to know how to speak “men” and how to speak “women.” A friend of mine is doing marketing for a technology company. He said he thought he would have it relatively easy. First, he’s a technologist. Second, when he started managing all women, he didn’t think it was a big deal because he’s gay. Now, he says, “Oh my god, are we different! Women make things so complicated.”

Women in engineering have found this. A male engineer will try something and, if it doesn’t work, it’s fine. They don’t worry about it and will keep trying. Women want to think about all the options first before they try a single thing. It drives men crazy.

I sometimes speak at events about men, women and handshakes. You guys shake hands all the time. You shake hands at the beginning and the end of the conversation, when you run into each other, at the start of the golf game and the end of the golf game.

Women shake hands the first time we meet each other. We might stand there afterward, after a few more times. If we really get to be buddies, we'll hug. Men don't even think about this.

Robert: Do you have some stuff about that in your book?

Diane: I do. It's really funny with the handshakes. It's also an etiquette thing. Technically, in true etiquette, men are supposed to wait to put their hand out. Women often don't know this.

In our world, still, women are often more junior to men. Women think they should wait for the man because he's the more senior person in the room. Men think they're supposed to wait because she's female. You end up with a really weird standoff.

I was talking to a law firm one time. It got really misinterpreted, to the point there was some conflict about it. It all came down to the handshake.

Robert: These days, you can just put your hand out and shake hands. That works.

Diane: You should. At the law firm, a man came up afterward and said, "I am horrified to tell you that I taught my 6-year-old son to shake hands, but I have never taught my 10-year-old daughter." He was ashen. I said, "It is okay. You can teach her tonight!"

If you had ever asked him, "Do you want equality for your daughter?" he would have said, "Absolutely." These are

the subtle gender or guanxi-diversity things that get overlooked but can really make our lives so much easier.

Robert:

We've covered a wide swath of topics in this hour and a half, Diane. It's really been a fun conversation, and it will really be useful. The thing that I got most from it is that there is not one right way to do networking. There are so many opportunities, possibilities and potentials for interaction that we really need to become students of networking.

We have to understand all these different things we can do, what works and what doesn't, to try things and jump in. Remember, at the bottom of it all is really what we started with. It's about building relationships. People end up doing business with you because they know, like and trust you. Essentially, through your networking, you're building that knowing, liking and trusting.

You shared a lot of great ideas. I encourage anyone who's listened to this and wants to get into the very specific things to pick up a copy of Diane's book, *The Networking Survival Guide*.

It is divided up into great categories, including what networking is, getting started, network accessories, body language, conversations, places to network, best practices for networking, follow-up techniques, best practices when not face-to-face, maintaining and growing your network and even the ethics of networking.

You even talk about what to do if I don't feel like networking, and you build a case for finding a way to do

it. There are also things about gender, race, culture and other networking factors. There is a huge amount of information in this book.

I think the title of your book is great, *The Networking Survival Guide*. If networking is confusing to you and you don't understand or like it, you just avoid it. If you're a professional service business, which most of our people are, without networking, you are dead in the water. It's not going to happen for you.

Diane: I have seen some people with brilliant technical skills who struggle. I've also seen people with marginal brightness, but they do very well because they can get along with people. They also know who to go to, such as secretaries, assistants or the junior audience.

I tell my MBA students, "Be sure you're nice to the receptionist. In many cases, companies will ask the receptionist whether a person should be hired." You can never assume that just because a person is behind the reception desk, is an assistant or is female that they're junior. I know some people who have gotten burned on that.

One of the articles I wrote for the *Boston Business Journal* contains a wonderful story about how the mail guy at a law firm got a woman the general counsel job at Starbucks. He was her reference.

The CEO of Starbucks saw her application and had vetted her on her law stuff. He saw the firm she worked for and said, "I know someone at that law firm."

He had gone to elementary school with the guy in the mailroom. He called him up and said, “How are you? What’s this person like?” The CEO knew she was a great attorney, but he wanted to know what she was like.

If the mail guy says yes, it means a lot. There are a lot of good, bright, talented people out there. There aren’t always good, bright, talented people who are nice.

Robert: That is very interesting. Diane, I really appreciate the time you’ve taken for the interview.

Diane: You are so welcome. This has been a pleasure.

Robert: Thanks a lot.